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THE LIFE

OF

MICHAEL SERVETUS,

THE SPANISH PHYSICIAN,

WHO, FOR THE ALLEGED CRIME OF HERESY, WAS

ENTRAPPED, IMPRISONED, AND BURNED,

BY

JOHN CALVIN THE REFORMER,

IN THE

CITY OF GENEVA, OCTOBER 27, 1553.

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON DRUMMOND, D.D.

“ Quis orthodoxum dicat ministrum Ecclesiæ accusatorem criminalem, et homicidam ? ”

M. SERVETUS.

“ Hæc non adfero quod mihi cum mortuis libeat luctari, sed quia video ita plerumque evenire, ut quisque mores imitetur ejus quem sibi sumpsit magistrum. ”—GROTIUS.

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MDCCCXLVIII.

“There is ONE God; and there is none other but he.”—*Mark* xii. 32.

“The doctrine of the Trinity appears to me so obviously unscriptural, that I am pretty sure, from my own experience and that of others, that no one possessed of merely common sense will fail to find its unscripturality after a methodical study of the Old and New Testaments, unless previously impressed in the early part of his life with creeds and forms of speech preparing the way to that doctrine.”—*Rammohun Roy's Final Appeal*, p. 354.

“If, by reason of the variety of tempers, abilities, educations, and unavoidable prejudices, whereby men's understandings are variously formed and fashioned, they do embrace several opinions, whereof some must be erroneous: to say that God will damn them for such errors, who are lovers of Him and lovers of Truth, is to rob man of his comfort, and God of his goodness;—it is to make man desperate, and God a tyrant.”—*Chillingworth*.

TO
ANDREW CARMICHAEL, ESQ.,
A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER,
WHO TO
REFINEMENT OF MANNERS AND ELEGANCE OF TASTE,
UNITES A LOVE FOR THE
LOFTIEST SPECULATIONS OF SCIENCE, AND INTREPIDITY
IN THE QUEST OF TRUTH;

AND TO
RICHARD CARMICHAEL, ESQ.,
FELLOW, AND LATE PRESIDENT,
OF THE
ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND,
WHOSE EMINENT SUCCESS IN THE
NOBLE PROFESSION WHICH HE IMPROVES AND ADORNS,
HAS BEEN MERITED AND ATTAINED
BY THE EXERCISE OF
SPLENDID TALENTS AND PHILANTHROPIC VIRTUES;
THIS LITTLE VOLUME,
AS A MARK OF GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE REGARD
AND ESTEEM,

IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

May 26, 1848.



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P R E F A C E .

THE name of Michael Servetus, the celebrated Spanish Physician, whose researches into the structure of the human frame led to a full discovery of the circulation of the blood, will always hold an honoured place in the annals of Medicine. It will also hold a place in Ecclesiastical history as affording a memorable example of Calvinistic bigotry by which “a wise and holy man”* was brought to a premature and unhappy end, for holding opinions deemed heterodox and heretical. While Calvin is remembered Servetus cannot be forgotten.

Should any gentle reader ask for what purpose is a new Life of Servetus offered to the public, the answer is simple, and, it is hoped, satisfactory. The words of the motto from Grotius in the title page† afford a good reason for letting the world know something of the man whom the Calvinistic churches have for their master and guide. We are admonished in Holy Writ to beware of

* Servetus is so denominated by the pious and good Rev. John Wesley.

† I publish these memoirs not from any desire to hold a controversy with the dead, but because I see, as generally happens, that every one imitates the manners, and follows the example of the master whom he selects for his guide.

false prophets, and assured that a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Had the antichristian spirit of Calvin died with himself there would be little necessity now for drawing attention to the character, the principles, and the crimes of the homicide reformer. But while Calvinism exists it will be the duty of christian ministers to expose its false doctrines, its ignorance and perversion of evangelical truth, its demoralizing tendencies, and its intolerant and persecuting principles, as exemplified in the conduct of its founder—especially as attempts are frequently made to justify, to palliate, to excuse his murder of Servetus—to varnish the infernal deed, and make it appear as an act dictated by a warm and sublimated zeal for the glory of God, and carried into execution by the spirit of the age and the laws of Geneva!

If “he who allows oppression shares the crime,” what shall we say of the men of God who dare to justify the burning of “a wise and holy man” for the pretended sin of heresy?

A writer (G. Emlyn) in the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* for September, 1806, says of Calvin that, the “undue attachment to that unfeeling demagogue, and a disposition and readiness to vindicate and extenuate his very worst actions, are still as visible as ever, and that instances frequently occur which but too plainly evince that modern Calvinism is by no means free from the antichristian spirit of its founder.” What would that writer have said had he witnessed the recent persecutions carried on by Calvinists against Unitarians both in England and Ireland, and

for reasons similar to those which led Calvin to vilify, rob, incarcerate, and burn the Spanish physician?*

It might be hoped that in the lapse of three hundred years the principles of Calvinism had undergone some modification, and that now, in the nineteenth century, they were less intolerant than in the sixteenth. But the fact is, that while the standards of Calvinistic faith continue unchanged, no improvement can be expected. Its spirit is as acrid, as intolerant and vindictive now as ever, and as eager to tyrannize, and to encroach on the rights and liberties of christian men. It has long reigned predominant in "The General Assembly" of Ulster; mystifying the people, inculcating false doctrine, boasting of its orthodoxy, while acting in foul violation of the great commandments on which hang all the Law and the Prophets, and giving ample proof that, were it not chained by the Legislature, it would never cease to perpetrate such iniquities as put religion to shame, and crucify the Son of God afresh. It cannot, indeed, burn a Servetus, for the statute *de comburendo hæretico* has been absolutely annulled, but until very recently it enjoyed the felicity of harassing Christians by ruinous processes in law, of robbing ministers and congregations of their houses of worship, of destroying their charitable institutions, and of seizing on the portion of the widow and orphan. These are facts which can not

* " Rival hai, dont tout le crime etait
De raisonner mieuxque lui ne fesait."

Ferocious Calvin, to decide the strife,
Resolved to take his hated rival's life,
Stained with no crime, but that the sturdy elf
Reasoned from Scripture better than himself.

and ought not to be concealed. Christian ministers, those especially of the Three Nonsubscribing bodies of Protestant Dissenters in Ireland, should know with what an evil spirit of bigotry and rapacity they have to contend, and, profiting by experience, guard against its machinations. Let them not forget that the warmth infused into the frozen viper imparts to it the power of stinging its benefactor to death. In what respects have the modern Calvins and Colladons—the all-work La Fontaines — the honourable and pious Antonies, and the other vagabonds, who planned and conducted the last conspiracy to destroy them, degenerated from their forefathers? Are they less acrimonious, less vindictive, less mendacious, or less prone, in contempt and defiance of Apostolic reprehension, to “go to law, to do wrong, and to defraud”?—1 Cor. vi. 7, 8.

So lately ago as 1846 was published in Edinburgh, a book bearing the following title: “CALVIN and SERVETUS. *The Reformer's share in the Trial of Michael Servetus, Historically ascertained. From the French, with Notes and Additions. By the Rev. W. K. Tweedie. Edinburgh.*”

The object of this work, particularly of the “Notes and Additions,” is to place the conduct of the Reformer in a new light, to palliate his conduct, and, in a word, to acquit him of the murder with which he stands charged—an object in which the reverend author has completely failed. The French part of the work which he has translated was published, as he informs us, in 1844, by M. A. Rilliet of Geneva, “in which he has with great painstaking and impartiality concentrated the light of history, made yet more clear by that of docu-

ments hitherto unexamined or unpublished." Rilliet corroborates the principal facts, but he informs us of little or nothing which was not well known before. He has not washed out the sable hue of the Ethiopian, nor changed Satan into an angel of light. Of the thousands who, according to the Rev. W. K. Tweedie, regard Calvin as "the truculent and relentless murderer of Servetus," his book will convince no *Christian* man of the contrary. Though Rilliet does not come forward as the friend and disciple of Servetus, he has the honesty to vindicate his character against the foul calumny which Calvinists reiterate, that his design was to extinguish religion, and not to restore Christianity to its primitive purity. As for placing the conduct of the man-burner in a new and more advantageous light, it only renders his evil doings more conspicuous. By challenging a more close scrutiny, it throws them into relieve, and imparts to them the hues of a more inveterate malignity. The attempt to defend what is indefensible argues folly;—it may argue a willingness to participate in the commission of crime. Who that has a regard for truth, for justice, for mercy would hazard his claim to the possession of these virtues, by standing up as the advocate of one, who was ever prompt to belie, to vilify, to persecute to death by sword or fire every man who dared to differ from him in religious opinion?*

Well might Servetus ask, who

* "The confederate states of Switzerland (1558) refused to recognize it (Geneva) as their ally, on account of the troubles which continued to prevail, resulting partly from its new-born freedom, and partly occasioned by the extreme austerity and religious zeal of *Calvin*, who menaced all who rejected his doctrines with exile, the sword, and the stake."—ZSCHOKKE'S *Hist. of Switzerland*, p. 205.

can call him an orthodox minister of the church, who is a criminal accuser and a homicide? His mantle has fallen on the shoulders of many of his posterity; and multitudes in the present day, both in England and Ireland know to their cost that the diabolical spirit of Calvinism still exists, and that it is going about, not "like a raging lion," for that is a generous beast, but like a cunning fox, with the jaws and the appetite of a hyæna, seeking whom it may devour.

Would that those who are possessed by this unclean spirit, were to have it exorcised by the word of God! That they would repent of their iniquitous encroachments on the rights of Christians, and prove their repentance sincere, by making ample restitution to those whom they have foully defrauded! Let them, for their own sake, abandon the heart-withering, conscience-searing superstitions of Calvin, for the heavenly doctrines of Christianity, and turning from the idolatry of Calvin's God, a God of wrath and of vengeance, of inexorable cruelty, and "an enslaved will," learn to worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who rules with paternal kindness and affection, with wisdom, with justice and mercy, in heaven and on earth; and who, instead of dooming his frail children, for no offence of their own, to "most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire for ever," is what Scripture teaches, gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy; who desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live, and who will have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

Since the preceding lines were sent to the press, the author has read the article on M. Servetus in the *Christian Reformer* for this month, May, 1848. It is taken from the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, (Paris), which is now publishing a series of articles, by Emile Saisset, on Servetus. The object of these articles is twofold—first, and chiefly, the restoration of the philosophical and religious doctrines of Servetus, and then, as a sequel, a true narrative of his conflict with Calvin, and the tragedy in which it terminated.

“What honest heart,” he asks, “is not shocked by the narrative of this tragical event? What upright mind does not revolt at the sight of that funeral pile which heretical Geneva compelled Servetus to ascend for the crime of heresy, where men who had separated themselves from the church, for the sake of free inquiry and the sacred rights of conscience—men who at Paris would have been sacrificed with Anne of Dubourg—burnt alive a sincere theologian, a man of great genius, for having used the right of private judgment in the interpretation of the Bible!”

E. Saisset has had access to various sources of information hitherto unknown or inaccessible to other writers on this subject, and particularly to a MS. of 200 folio pages, which is entitled “*Proces de Michel Servetus*,” and to the registers of the “*Petit Conseil*,” all of which, he informs us, have been placed at his disposal. He has also enjoyed the privilege of reading a genuine copy of the *Restitution du Christianisme*, one of the only two copies extant, and which is kept in the royal library. “It is a curious circumstance,” he says, “that this is

the identical copy of which Colladon made use when he arranged with Calvin the proceedings against Michael Servetus. It still bears in its margin the damning marks which that penetrating and inflexible theologian inscribed upon it. It was snatched from the flames by some unknown hand, and we can observe, in its blackened leaves, the marks of fire. It is from the pages of this volume, full of tragical mementoes—by means of these lines, in parts half effaced by the rust of age, in parts obliterated and reduced to ashes by the flames—that we have attempted to extract the buried thoughts of the author.”

The researches of E. Saisset have led him to place the character of Servetus before us in a novel aspect. He says, that he was “not merely a great heresiarch, but also a philosopher. He is entitled to a place amidst that group of thoughtful men who enthusiastically cherished the Platonism of Alexandria. We see in him not only the rival and the victim of Calvin, the reforming physician, the Christian heresiarch, but the philosophical and pantheistic theologian, whom we should not have expected to find the forerunner of Malebranche and of Spinoza, of Schleier, Macher, and of Strauss.”

Again he says, “A distinctive mark of his character was a passionate, irresistible, insatiable curiosity, about religious opinions. He wished to grasp, and to fathom the depths of physiology, medicine, mathematics, geography, and the eastern languages. But these pursuits were only rapid episodes in his life. His soul was wholly given to the contemplation of the controversies of Christianity. Standing alone, he believed that he had

found the key to unlock all the difficulties of his age; not that he thought the Reformation was wrong, but he considered that it had stopped half way. He professed to give it a new impulse, and he cherished the design of offering to the world a work which neither Luther, Zuingle, nor Calvin had dared to undertake—a Christianity inspired with fresh youth, rebuilt from the base to the summit—a Christianity for the future, which was also in his view the Christianity of the past.”

The only works of Servetus which the author of the following Memoir has seen, are in a quarto volume, containing two treatises in the manuscript of two different hands. Of these, the former is entitled: “*De Trinitatis Erroribus, Libri vii., per Michaellem Serveto, alias Reves, ab Arragonia Hispanum, Anno 1531.*” This is a beautiful MS., and evidently of a much more recent date than 1531; copied, in all probability, from an original printed copy of that date. It contains 148 leaves, written on both sides, and making double that number of pages. The other work is entitled, “*Dialogorum de Trinitate Libri duo. De Justitia Regni Christi Capitula Quatuor, Anno, MDXXXII.*” containing forty-five leaves, and double that number of pages. In a brief preface, the author makes the *retractation* mentioned in page sixteen of this Memoir; and modestly expresses his wish, that no christian may be offended by the incorrectness of his style, since God himself manifests his wisdom by the foolish things of the world. He beseeches his readers to attend to the subject only, and that his style will be no impediment to his meaning.

Of the four *Capitula*, the first treats of the Apostle

Paul's doctrine of Justification; the second, of the Kingdom of Christ; the third, of the Law compared with the Gospel; and the fourth, of Charity. After stating the subjects of his work, he prays that Christ may cause it to tend to the glory of God and a knowledge of the truth.

The MS. is in fine legible penmanship, but not so elegant as that of the work which precedes it.

This volume, as it appears from a printed inscription on the inside of the cover, belonged to a physician of Frankfort on the Maine, (*Frankfurti ad Moenum.*) It was presented to the Rev. John Montgomery,* when a student in Glasgow, and by him kindly intrusted, for a season, to the author's care. It did not, however, fall in with the design of this Memoir, to give an analysis of its contents, but it may not be superfluous to say, that the very titles of the work and its *Capitula* prove, that questions in religion had deeply engaged the attention of its author; and that the more we learn of this "wise and holy" Christian philosopher, the more is our admiration of his character increased; and the more profound is our regret that a man so richly endowed, and so capable of leading forward the human mind in the march of improvement, should be doomed to a premature death, by the animosity of an envious and revengeful bigot.

* Nephew of the Rev. Dr. Montgomery, to whom the Protestant Dissenters of Ireland are so much indebted, for his strenuous and successful exertions in defending them against Calvinistic intolerance and rapacity.

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THE
LIFE OF SERVETUS.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and parentage of Servetus.—Education.—Goes to Italy in the suite of the Emperor Charles V.—Studies the Scriptures, and entertains the idea of restoring Christianity to its primitive simplicity.—Visits Geolampadius.—Their conference.—Oppugns the doctrine of the Trinity.—Conjectures as to the original source of his doctrinal opinions.

THE spirit excited by Luther and his coadjutors in the great work of the Reformation, put the whole religious world into commotion. Not only divines, whose business it was to study the sacred volume, became actively engaged in theological warfare, but others, of all grades and professions, took a zealous part in their proceedings. They opened the long-closed pages of the sacred volume, and dared not only to read but to meditate on its contents.

Among these was Michael Servetus, a Spanish physician, who, even in early youth, being deeply imbued with the prevailing spirit, felt that he had as valid a right to read the Scriptures, and from them to form his own religious creed, as any of those who were at that time battling against the Roman hierarchy. Accordingly, in pursuance of his inquiries, he arrived at conclusions in some questions widely different from those which were generally received, and actuated by that love of truth which is most prevalent in noble minds, he did not hesitate to make them known. The persecution and sufferings which in consequence he endured give him a just claim to our sympathy—his independence of mind and patient fortitude entitle him to our praise and admiration.

Doctor Michael Servetus was a Spaniard, the son of a notary, born A.D. 1509, in Villa-nova in Arragon,* and baptized by the name of Michael—a very common appellation in Spain. His parents were not Jews, as has been surmised, but christians of ancient extraction, and of competent, if not affluent, fortune.† As the light of the Reformation had not penetrated into Spain in his earlier years, it can scarcely be questioned that he was brought up in the religion of Rome. Who were his preceptors, says one of his biographers,‡ is not known, but it is clearer than the meridian sun, he adds, that from his earliest years he was of a genius not too strictly disciplined, *non nimis castigato ingenio*—of a corrupt judgment, and a mind prone to every kind of impiety and novelty. For it is peculiar to Spaniards to be strongly inclined to subtleties, and *inanes argutias*—a disposition which their warm climate excites and cherishes. From this statement we may gather that Servetus disdained to be the slave of established error and prevalent superstition; but, as to impiety, his whole history demonstrates that it is a slander. He testifies of his own country-men that though they had a happy genius it was unhappily exercised; though only half-taught they imagined themselves profoundly learned; that they delighted in sophistry and verbiage; and were of all mortals the most superstitious.§ Great, then, is the honour due to Servetus for being singular among such a people, and for his courage in bursting the ghostly chains by which he was in danger of being cruelly enthralled. A young mind casting down the

* Tudelle in Navarre has also been mentioned as the place of his birth. Father Maimbourg the Jesuit, in his *Histoire de L'Arianisme*, vol. iii. p. 338, says he was born in Catalonia. This must be a mistake. It has been affirmed that he was born in 1511, but his own declaration at his trial in August, 1553, that he was then forty-four years old, clearly fixes the date of his birth to 1509.—*Memoirs of Literature*, vol. iv. p. 41.

“Born in Spain, the native country of the *auto-da-fe*, he fled from it only to see his effigy consumed in a foreign land, by the toreh of a Popish executioner, and at last to die in flames kindled by Calvinistic justice.”—*Illust by Tweedie*. True;—from Calvinistic justice good Lord deliver us!

† Calvin was born the same year as Servetus, viz., 10th July, 1509.

‡ *Vivans noblement*, as he answered, when examined by the Syndics of Geneva.

§ Allwoerden.

§ Allwoerden. p. 7.

yoke of spiritual slavery and asserting that freedom which is the birthright of every human being, is a spectacle worthy of the highest eulogy which the friends of liberty and truth can bestow.

He received his elementary instructions in the liberal arts from the Dominicans, and at a very early age became distinguished for his proficiency in the learning and philosophy of the times. Chauffpie says, that from his earliest youth, he applied himself incessantly to the most serious studies, wherein he made such a rapid progress that at fourteen years of age he understood Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and had a pretty extensive knowledge of Philosophy, Mathematics, and the Scholastic Divinity. Though his right to such encomiums has been questioned,* it is no small proof of the high character he had gained both for his moral and literary qualifications, that in the year 1528, when he was only nineteen years of age, he was taken, as private secretary, into the service of Quintaine, Charles the Fifth's Confessor. He went in the suite of that emperor into Italy, and saw him crowned at Boulogna by Pope Clement VII., in 1529, as King of Lombardy and Emperor of the Romans. This ceremony, which the Pope performed with the usual formalities, far from exciting the admiration of Servetus, greatly shocked his feelings, and he afterwards referred to it with great indignation as savouring of idolatry.†

Leaving Italy he went to Germany with Quintaine, who died in the subsequent year. Being now thrown on his own resources, he went to Toulouse and turned his attention to the study of Law. There he also devoted a large portion of his time to the sacred Scriptures, and discovered in them much that was adverse to those doctrines of the Roman Pontiff with which his mind had been early imbued. He also discovered that some doctrines of the Reformation were destitute of scriptural proof; and though there was not an anti-

* SIMON, Rep. aux sentim. de quelques Theolog. de Hollande, ch. 19, p. 276.

† Robertson's Charles V. and the Christian Reformer, January, 1847.

trinitarian in all Gaul, he thought he could wield his pen against the doctrines of the Trinity with as much right and liberty as the Reformers against the Pope's infallibility, or the "corporal presence" of Christ in the eucharist. Finding, however, that this task was impracticable in Gaul, he determined to return to Germany, where he hoped to find less obstruction and more encouragement to prosecute the grand design which he meditated to bring back the christian world to the simple doctrine of the Bible. The very idea of such a noble and gigantic project in such an age, and in a man so young, for he was now only about twenty or one and twenty years of age, argues a mind of uncommon vigour and intrepidity. He went by the way of Lyons and Geneva to Basil, where he conferred with Œcolampadius; and thence proceeded to Strasburg to discourse with two other celebrated reformers, Bucer and Capito.

Bullinger states that Œcolampadius had a conference with Zuinglius concerning Servetus, whom they considered as petulant and pertinacious in discoursing on religious subjects, and that both these reformers took pains to prevent his errors from spreading. He farther states that Servetus accused Œcolampadius of harshness—whence we may conclude that their meeting was productive of little satisfaction to either. They argued both orally and in writing concerning the "Confession" of Servetus, which he presented to Œcolampadius, of whose letters on the subject two are still extant.

Rouchat, who places these conferences in 1530, is mistaken, says Yair, in supposing them posterior to the impression of the first work of Servetus against the Trinity, viz., seven small books entitled *De trinitatis erroribus*, which he had caused to be printed in Basil or the neighbourhood, whereas the conferences were antecedent to the publication of those volumes. "They treated of the trinity in general, and of the consubstantiality of Jesus Christ in particular, which the Spaniard impugned with an obstinacy and bitterness that *enraged* his adversary." From these letters, which may be seen in Allwoerden and Yair, we learn the subjects of their

discussion, with their mutual complaints and recriminations. Servetus contended that the church had departed from the fundamental principles of the true faith, and denied the doctrine of two natures in Christ, which his antagonist laboured as strenuously to prove. Both disputants displayed, as is usual in religious controversy, more vivacity of temper and asperity of language than could be justified by the spirit of cool philosophical inquiry. Œcolampadius had reached the mature age of forty-eight, and may have felt irritated and "enraged" that any of his religious dogmas should be questioned by one so greatly his inferior in years; while, on the other hand, Servetus felt instigated by his irrepressible love of truth, or what he deemed truth, to impugn the errors of his opponent in a style and manner little adapted to conciliate or convince. Nevertheless he writes a soothing and deprecatory letter to Œcolampadius intreating him not to prohibit him from sending his books into France, especially as the fair of Lyons was approaching. "If you judge it more prudent for me to remain no longer here, I will depart; only do not think me a fugitive. God knows that my conscience is sound in all that I have written, though you may perhaps think otherwise on account of the crudity of my language." For this he adds some apology; and after stating that it is the condition of our nature to err, concludes by expressing his abhorrence of the belief that men should be punished with death for mistakes in the interpretation of Scripture, since the very elect are not exempt from error.

It appears, from the commencement of one of his letters, that Servetus had complained of the harshness of his antagonist, and Œcolampadius retorts the charge by affirming that he had greater cause of complaint. "*Conquereris me esse tibi molestum et durum, mihi autem major conquerendi causa est.*" In the course of his letter he states what he understands to be the creed of Servetus, viz., that there is One Omnipotent God only, altogether simple in his essence, and in no manner composed of parts—who, by his word and holy spirit,

created and established all things—and One Lord Jesus Christ, begotten by the eternal word of the Father, and constituted the Saviour, through whose intercession, the Holy Spirit, by the ministry of angels, is imparted to us. This creed or confession was far from satisfying Œcolampadius, though he admits that it might gain the approbation of a simpleton who had no suspicion of any latent heresy. He then proceeds to state his own belief, that God is simple in his nature, and by no means composed of parts—and then, in the usual style of orthodoxy, contradicts himself, by stating that in this most simple nature there are three hypostases, the diversity of which is by no means prejudicial to the simplicity of that nature. He denies that the Son and Holy Spirit in whose names we are baptized, are among the works or creatures of God, though Christ, as to his humanity, is a creature. He concludes by saying that Servetus is more of a Jew than a Christian and prays that he may be enlightened.

In his second letter he advises Servetus to believe that Christ is consubstantial and coequal with the Father, and that then he can acknowledge him as a Christian.

In the letters of Œcolampadius there was no argument, either from reason or Scripture, to produce that enlightenment which he wished for his correspondent. Servetus could not change his opinions nor adopt a new creed at the word of command. He adhered to the great fundamental truth of all religion, both natural and revealed, that there is but one God, the Father, and none else beside him. As for hypostases, traditionary enigmas and Athanasian figments, which insult reason and common sense, he may have wondered by what oblique process of intellect they were ever invented, and how they came to usurp authority over the dictates of Inspiration.

It was commonly reported that Servetus went to Africa to learn Arabic, and read the Alcoran in the original language, and that there he imbibed the false notions of the Jews and Turks.* But whether he went

* His American biographer in *The Monthly Repository* for 1810, page 164, says, "that a superficial acquaintance with the errors of Servetus is more

to that country from Gaul or Spain, or whether he went at all or not, has not been determined. La Roche treats the whole as a fable, and also Crellius. Yair observes that if Servetus had gone to Africa, he would have given some intimation of it in the preface to his Ptolomæus where he enumerates the different countries which he had visited; but he speaks of Mauritania only from report, and does not so much as use one expression which can give the most distant suspicion that he was ever in Africa.

The report, as Allwoerden conjectures, may have originated in the comparisons instituted by his adversaries between his doctrines and those of the Turks and Jews, in his having sometimes quoted the Alcoran, and affirmed that both Turks and Jews turned the doctrine of the Trinity into derision. In his book on that doctrine he says:—"Some are scandalized because I call Christ a prophet, since they do not themselves give him that appellation. To call Christ a prophet appears to them to be Judaism or Mahometanism, regardless of the fact that he is so denominated in Scripture and by the ancient christians."

In one of his dialogues Servetus asks Petruccio by what reasons and scriptures he is condemned, and Petruccio answers. "By none that I have heard, but by clamours and invocations of great councils. I have seen some fearing lest, mayhap, this may prove a tradition like the Talmud and Alcoran, because it is not redolent of the spirit of the Lord, and Scripture in many passages suffers violence."

The following passage, translated from the Latin, will exemplify the pungent style in which he accosted his opponents. "What Turk, Seythian, or Barbarian, tell me I beseech you, can endure, without laughter,

than sufficient to refute this suggestion, (that he borrowed his opinions from Mahomet's followers). In these is nothing homogeneous with those of the Arabian impostor; as he rather acceded to those of Paul of Samosata, Photinus, and others congenial to them."

Crellius, one of the most learned of Socinian writers is of the same opinion, and with him Allwoerden concurs, because Servetus in speaking of his own travels, in his edition of Ptolemy, makes no mention of his being in Africa; which, if a fact, he would scarcely have omitted.

those logomachies, or strifes of words, as Paul calls them? Besides, what is more distressing than all is this—the tradition of the Trinity, oh grief! how fruitful a cause of derision it is to the Mahometans God only knows. The Jews also abhor the imagination and deride our folly about the Trinity, which they hold to be a blasphemy, and believe not that he is the Messiah who is promised in the Law. Not only the Mahometans and Hebrews, but the beasts of the fields might mock us, if they should perceive our fantastic notions—for all the works of the Lord bless the One God.”

The man who could express himself thus had nothing to expect from his adversaries but “Calvinistic justice” and the most unrelenting persecution.

In 1530 or 1531 he left Basil and went to Strasburg where he conferred with Bucer and Capito, but with no more gratifying result. His heterodoxy seems to have excited the indignation of those reformers, intolerant as they were of all heterodoxy except their own. Bucer inveighed against him most violently from the pulpit, and proved the justice of his own claims to orthodoxy, by declaring that Servetus deserved to have his entrails plucked out, and his body torn in pieces.*

Various conjectures have been formed as to the original sources whence Servetus drew his opinions. But without entering into this inquiry here, it may suffice to say that they were in all probability derived, not, as has been surmised, from the Jews or Mahometans of Moorish race in Spain, but solely from the Scriptures, which to a rational and inquiring mind like his would clearly show that the doctrine of the Trinity is not only foreign to their pages, but totally at variance with them, and irreconcilable to their plainest and most positive injunctions. It is also to be remembered that Servetus was a man of capacious intellect—that he left few sources of knowledge unexplored, and that he was a student of law as well as of divinity. He required proper evidence of the truth of doctrines and opinions, as well as of facts.

* Pro suggestu pronunciauit dignum esse qui avulsis visceribus discerperetur.—*Calvini Epist. ad Sulcerum, clvi.*

He was not in the habit of taking assertion for proof, nor of identifying sound with sense. He could not, and would not, construct a whole system of divinity on one or two insulated texts—nor find in a figure of speech such doctrines as insult reason and impeach the justice and mercy of the Creator. His mind had been trained to inquiry, and particularly in the study of anatomy, to see and examine for itself. In that study he surpassed all his contemporaries, as is evident from his great discovery, or his leading to the great discovery, of the circulation of the blood in the human frame—a discovery which has done more good to the bodies of men, than all the nostrums of Calvin have ever done good to their souls. He was accustomed to look for demonstration, and not surrender his own judgment to the *ipse dixit* of any of the Fathers of his school, though it were to Galen, or Hippocrates, or Æsculapius himself. He carried the same spirit into religion, and acknowledging no human authority as infallible, he used the reason which God gave him to read and understand the Scriptures for himself. He felt that if it was his duty to employ all the talents which his Creator bestowed in inquiring what was useful for the health of the body, it could not be a less imperative duty to inquire what was useful for the health of the soul.

M·Crie, in his History of the Reformation in Italy, (pp. 178, 179) says, “It has been supposed by some writers that persons attached to the opinions of Arius had remained concealed in Italy down to the sixteenth century, and that the fame of the Reformation begun in Germany drew them from their lurking places. Some have even asserted that the mind of the well-known Michael Servetus was first tainted by intercourse with Italian heretics. But there is no good evidence for either of these opinions. It is much more probable that the Spaniard acquired his peculiar views, so far as they were not the offspring of his own invention, in Germany, subsequently to the visit which he paid to Italy at a very early period of his life. Before his name had been heard of, and within a few years after the commencement of

the Reformation, certain confused notions, sometimes approaching to the ancient tenets of Arius and Pelagius, and at other times assuming a form which bore a nearer resemblance to those afterwards called Socinian, were afloat in Germany, and vented by some of those who went by the common name of Anabaptists. Among these was Hetzer and Denck, who published translations of parts of Scripture before Luther. * * Servetus began to publish against the Trinity in the year 1531, and there is ground to believe that his books were soon after conveyed to Italy. Though he had not formed his peculiar opinions when he was in that country, yet he contracted, during the visit which he paid to it, an intimate acquaintance with several persons with whom he maintained an epistolary correspondence to a late period of his life; and it is known that he was as zealous in propagating his notions by private letters as by the press. Upon the whole, it is highly probable that the antitrinitarian opinions were introduced into Italy by means of the writings of Servetus."

In accordance with these notions, La Roche, Benson, and others, think it not improbable that Lælius Socinus, uncle of Faustus, and several other Italians, took their antitrinitarian opinions from the works of Servetus. But whence is the necessity of any such supposition? Had not the Socini and other learned Italians the Scriptures to read for themselves? Who of all the Reformers studied the Scriptures more critically or commented on them with more learning, or more profound judgment than the Socini and their followers and coadjutors? The works of the *Fratres Poloni* are treasures of christian knowledge. Dr. Harwood, who was no Socinian, candidly declares that "the most rational and instructive criticisms and annotations which were ever published upon the Scriptures, were executed by Socinus, Wolzogenius, Schlichtingius, Przipcovius, and Brennius. I have had occasion," he adds, "to consult and collate many commentators and critics upon the sacred writings, and I will venture to assert, that there is hardly a good criticism in all our modern expositors, but is to be found in that collection published under the

name of the Unitarian Brethren." Such preachers as are in the habit of vilifying Socinians and their doctrines would do themselves a service by consulting their writings, and not, in sheer ignorance of their history and their works, misrepresent and malign them. The Scriptures were the genuine sources of their antitrinitarian notions—these are the perennial fountains of all the Unitarian heresies. No doubt the opinions and the example of such a man as Servetus would have some influence; and it must have been gratifying to the Italians to find that they were not singular—but that other men, of other countries, in the independent exercise of their own judgment, came to the same conclusions.

CHAPTER II.

Servetus publishes a work on the Trinity. — Letters and opinions of Œcolampadius. — The Reformers alarmed. — Melancthon's fears. — Warns the senate of Venice. — Servetus in a second edition of his work retracts some expressions which he had used in the first. — Censured and justified. — Goes to Paris. — Proposed conference with Calvin. — Declined. — Persecutions in France and Italy. — Publishes his *Ratio Symporum*. — Obtains the degree of Doctor of Medicine. — Disputes with the Parisian doctors. — Goes to Lyons, thence to Avignon, Charlieu, and Vienne in Dauphiny.

SERVETUS, at his departure from Basil, left a manuscript on the doctrine of the Trinity in the hands of Conrad Rouss, a bookseller of that city, who, fearing to be known as its publisher, sent it to Haguenau in Alsatia, where it was printed and published by John Seccer, under the superintendance of Servetus, who for that purpose had removed to Strasburg. It was entitled "*De Trinitatis Erroribus Libri Septem, per MICHAELEM SERVETUM, alias REVES ab Arragonia HISPANUM, anno 1531.*" The place where it was printed is not mentioned in the title page; but La Roche says that he knows it was printed at Haguenau, and published at Strasburg and Frankfort before the month of August. When it appeared in Switzerland it caused no small consternation among those who were only beginning to emerge from spiritual darkness.

Œcolampadius in a letter to Bucer, tells him that their friends at Berne were greatly offended by this publication, and desires him to inform Luther that it was printed out of their country, and without their knowledge; and adds that their church will be ill-spoken of unless their divines make it their business to cry it down. "I beseech you in particular," says he, "to keep a watchful eye over it, and to make an apology for our church at least, in your Confutation inscribed to the Emperor. We know not how that beast came to creep in among us. He wrests all the passages of the Scriptures to prove that the Son is not coeternal and consubstantial with the Father, and that the man Christ is the Son of God." This letter is dated August 5, 1531.

"In this letter," says Wright, "he expresses himself neither like a gentleman nor a christian." And he might have added that it is more easy to cry down a book by noise and gibberish, than to reason it down by fair argument—to denounce a doctrine as heretical, than to prove by Scripture that it is antichristian.

Œcolampadius being requested by the magistrates of Basil to give his opinion of the book of Servetus, declared it to be pernicious, but in moderate terms. He also wrote to Servetus, and in a civil style besought him to renounce his errors—a request which would have been better timed when his opinions were demonstrated to be really erroneous. The Reformer took for granted the very point at issue, claiming for himself infallibility, as all creed-fabricators and creed-imposers do, presuming their own figments to be the dictates of eternal truth.

It seems to have been a favourite object with many of the Reformers to avoid exposure to the imputation of heresy, and like the passion of Fear as described by Collins, they were scared "e'en by the sounds themselves had made." They clung as closely as, with any show of consistency, was possible to their old long-cherished traditionary creeds. Just as in the present stage of religious inquiry, there are Arians who pique themselves on being nearer to the standard of orthodoxy than the Humanitarians. We find in several letters of

the Reformers how anxious they were that they and their churches should be cleared from the charge of heresy, and they express no small anxiety to be *purged* from such an imputation.

One mode of purgation was to inveigh against all who held doctrines which they called heretical. Accordingly the writings of reformers were bedaubed with invectives against Servetus. They considered it as an act of monstrous presumption, especially in a young man not of their fraternity, to question any doctrines which had obtained the sanction of ages—doctrines which, as Robinson expresses it, “even they, the elect of God, called by his grace, endued with the spirit, regularly ordained to the sacred ministry, and honoured to be the mouth of God to the laity, not only held and taught, but taught as truths so indisputable, that it was even a crime to suspect whether they were true.—Little doth a young generous mind like that of Servetus know to what a degree of settled hatred and savage zeal old habits of speculation rise in the hearts of some orthodox divines. On many subjects placid and serene; but on a few favourite points, deaf as the dead, and cruel as the bear bereaved of her whelps.”* Even the *gentle* Melancthon was exasperated; and in a letter to Camerarius expressed his indignation and fear, at the same time endeavouring to show that there was nothing to be feared. “The thoughts of Servetus,” says he, “are confused—he is acute and subtle, but wants gravity, and on the subject of justification is manifestly delirious—*manifesto delirat*.” As to the question of the Trinity, he expresses great dread of its revival, and augurs little good from inquiry about the hypostasis of the *logos* and of the *spirit*. “Concerning the doctrine of the Trinity,” says he, “you know that I always entertained great fears of its revival. Good God! what tragedies will this question—whether the *logos* is an hypostasis, and whether the *spirit* is an hypostasis—create among posterity?” He adds that there is no edification to be gained by minute inquiry

* Robinson's *Eccles. Researches*, p. 329.

into the ideas we should entertain of hypostases and their differences.

The favourable reception of the book of Servetus in some regions, and particularly in Italy, excited the apprehensions of the orthodox. Their terrors betrayed a consciousness that their orthodoxy was an unsound and tottering fabric which some daring hand might lay prostrate and in ruins; therefore all their energies were called forth to crush those by whom it was questioned. Melancthon wrote to the senate of Venice in 1539 to put them on their guard—to inform them that Servetus had revived the errors of Paulus Samosatensis—that his book had obtained extensive circulation in their country—and he implored them to use their utmost exertions to have it suppressed.

“Such,” says Wright, “were the measures adopted by the professed reformers to stop the progress of free inquiry, and counteract the efforts of Servetus to promote a farther reformation. They treated him with scurrility; they endeavoured to prevent the circulation of his books by all the means in their power; they laboured to prejudice his cause every where; their object was to cry him down; even a popish senate was invoked to use their utmost endeavours to cause his doctrine to be avoided, rejected, and abhorred; *i. e.*, in plain language, to suppress his writings by the whole weight of their power and authority, and to proscribe all who might seem to countenance them. Was it for this they cast off their sovereign lord the pope, broke the yoke of his tyranny from their necks, and abjured the Church of Rome; that they might be popes themselves, impose a yoke of bondage on the necks of others, and form a church after the model of that they had abjured? Was it for this they put the Scriptures into the hands of the people, and made so loud an outcry against the errors and abominations of popery; that they might anathematize those who gave a different sense of Scripture to themselves? Was it that they might be sole arbiters in religious controversy, and regarded as the infallible expositors of Scripture, that they rejected the infallibility of popes and

councils? If not; why did they attempt to suppress the writings of those who differed from them?"

Melancthon's fears as to the revival of the controversy about the Trinity were prophetic. From his days till now that controversy has been waged with a prodigious waste of learning, with interminable discussion, and with a violence and animosity seldom if ever exceeded. The advocates of the doctrine with all their industry and perseverance have never been able to render it in the slightest degree intelligible. The human mind has exhausted its powers in trying to define and explain it, but all its labours end in darkness and confusion: and the doctrine of Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity is as far from being understood in the present day, as when it was agitated by the Arians and Athanasians of old. Though the writer of this is by no means ambitious of the character of a prophet, he will venture to predict that while ever the antiscritptural and traditionary doctrine of a Trinity is advocated it will meet a determined opposition; nor will it cease to be disputed till the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity—the divine Unity and the paternal character of the God and Father of all—be understood and admitted; till Jehovah shall be adored as king over all the earth; till "there shall be one Jehovah and his name One." The first step to the restoration of primitive Christianity is the assertion of the divine unity in opposition to a plurality and distinction of persons. This being once received, other truths will follow and gain the ascendancy which they claim, and which is their due. The doctrine of Original Sin,—which, as some maintain, lies at the very foundation of Christianity, but of which there is not a syllable in the teachings of Jesus—will be discarded, and all the distinguishing peculiarities of Calvinism consigned to oblivion, or remembered only with abhorrence, and with astonishment that ever they should have been held by men professing to have a knowledge of him who came to teach that God is all-wise, and just, and good—who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved.

Unmoved by the censures of his enemies, Servetus published another edition of his work, printed at Haguenau, 1532, under the title of "*Dialogorum de Trinitate Libri duo—De Justitia regni Christi Capitula quatuor.*" He prefaced the dialogues by stating that he retracted his former work on that subject, not because he held the opinions which it expressed to be false, but imperfect. "*Non quia falsa sunt, sed quia imperfecta, et a parvulo parvulis scripta.*" And also because it was in style barbarous, confused, and incorrect, owing to his own want of skill and the carelessness of the printer.

This circumstance did not escape the malevolent animadversions of men who were themselves acting with the greatest inconsistency—men who, as Robinson truly affirms, "had retracted opinions, not words; and who called their own retractions a conversion from popery; a coming out of darkness into light; an effect of the grace of God, and the irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit; by men, too, who required all their followers to change their opinions, and who condemned the pontiff of Rome and all his cardinals, the whole clergy and all catholic states, because they would not recant popery." Some of their own sanctified fraternity were as liable to their animadversions for the same cause as Servetus, but what was a crime in him might have been regarded in them as a proof of their candour and honesty!

"We are told that Bucer used, as often happens among learned men as long as they live, to revise his lucubrations, to add or take away, and even to retract some things. Bucer declares this concerning himself, in his preface to his commentaries on the gospels, in these words:—'This disturbs some, because they make no doubt but many will be offended, that I now seem not very consistent with myself. Because the Lord has given me to understand some places more fully than I formerly did, which as it is so bountifully given to me, why should I not impart it liberally to my brethren, and ingenuously declare the goodness of the Lord? What inconsistency is there in profiting in the work of salvation? And who in this age or in the last, has treated

of the Scripture, and has not experienced that, even in this study, one day is the scholar of another?' Afterwards he produces the example of Augustine in his retractations, and wishes that more books of retractations were published."*

What is more common than to find in the second and third, and each subsequent edition of works, in every department of learning, the correction of errors† which had escaped in the first—with various modifications or retractions of opinion? It is the characteristic of bigotry to remain obstinately attached to the errors it has once embraced in defiance of demonstration itself—and this obstinacy it chooses to dignify as a virtue by the name of consistency.

As Servetus must have been conscious, from past experience, that the republication of his work on the Trinity would expose him to unsparing and revengeful hostility, it affords unquestionable evidence of his courage his zeal, and religious integrity. He was anxious to bring to light the long-despised or forgotten truth that God is one, and in pursuance of this great design, even his enemies must allow that he was uniform and consistent. It does not appear that he was attached to the creeds or systems of any of the reformers. He thought and inquired, and wrote and published independently from his own convictions—assured that his right to do all this, was just as valid as that of any of the reformers to renounce papal authority. But he was taught to know that his claim to such a right, though founded on the dictates of eternal truth, would be regarded as a fatal heresy. That right the principal reformers considered as exclusively their own. Though they had renounced the popes, they retained their popery, and were as hostile as ever to free inquiry on every topic which did not harmonize with their creeds and confessions. From none of them had he any thing to expect but to be vilified and persecuted.

* *Biographia Evangelica* i. p. 265.

† Quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura.—HOR.

Having remained at Lyons nearly three years, occupied, probably, in correcting his writings and studying the Scriptures, he went to Paris about the year 1534, partly with a view to benefit his health, which was delicate, and to improve his knowledge of the theory and practice of medicine. To this study he applied himself with such diligence and success, under Sylvius and Fernelius, two of the most eminent physicians of the age, that he soon obtained the degree of M. D.—having previously obtained that of A. M., as it was contrary to the laws of the Parisian schools to grant the higher degree before the lower. He taught the mathematics to students of the academy; and though he assumed the title of Doctor and resolved to follow the practice of physic, he by no means relinquished the study of the sacred volume. While in Paris, he became acquainted with Calvin, and, as he made no secret of his religious opinions, he expressed a wish to have a theological conference with that redoubtable reformer. A time was appointed for their meeting, but, on due consideration, it was said to be declined by Servetus; for, according to Beza, he did not appear at the appointed time, because he dared not to stand before the face of Calvin! Allwoerden very justly says, that he fears this is a vainglorious boast, for Beza himself testifies that Calvin was at this time in jeopardy: the popish priesthood in Paris being equally hostile to all who did not bend to their authority. Both parties may have judged it prudent, under such circumstances, not to prosecute a discussion which, by exciting popular attention, would provoke their enemies to vengeance. As for Servetus standing in awe of Calvin, *credat Judæus Apella—non ego*. Of Calvin's abilities he had no great esteem. His general conduct, and his writings, evinced that he had no fear of any opponent in the way of argument.*

But there was another enemy whom both parties, had

* "The Calvinists have since said, God Almighty called Calvin to Paris just at that critical time. Servetus had not heard of that, and it is clear from many anecdotes which afterwards transpired, he had no great opinion either of the genius or religion of Calvin. They were much of an age, and it is not improbable that Servetus, who was a high-spirited man, declined a contest in which he thought a victory would not do him much honour."—*R. Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches*, p. 331.

they held a theological discussion, might have found just reason to dread. The fires of intolerance had been blazing in France from the first dawn of the Reformation, and the bloodhounds of persecution were eager in quest of heretics to feed the flames. The reformed doctrine began to be preached in 1523, and Calvin in divers places had preached and set forth 128 axioms, as he called them, disagreeing with the doctrines of the Romish Church. In consequence, he had become "an object of suspicion to the parliament of Paris—his apartments were searched, and he was obliged to flee in disguise from the city."* In the same year John Clerk was apprehended at Milden, for fixing on the church door, a certain Bill against Indulgences, and calling the pope antichrist, for which he was thrice whipped, and had a mark of infamy branded on his forehead. After this he was caught throwing down images in Metz, for which his hand was cut off from his right arm, his nose torn from his face with sharp pincers, his arms and breasts mutilated, and then he was burned. In 1525 Dr. John Castellan was seized by the Cardinal of Lorraine's servants, degraded and burned. Wolfgangus Scuch met a similar fate. In 1533 John Burges, merchant; Bartholomew Mylen, a lame cripple; Poille of Couberon; Costella, a school-mistress; Stephen de la Fogge, merchant; and John Pointer, a chirurgeon; were condemned and burned in Paris. William Husson, an apothecary, for scattering books concerning christian doctrine and the abuse of human tradition, had his tongue cut out, and was afterwards burnt at Rhoan.† But it would only distress the reader to enumerate the victims which, year after year, in all the principal towns of France, died under the blood-thirsty and merciless hands of the orthodox. No age, sex, or profession, on which fell the slightest suspicion of what they termed heresy, was safe; and the cruel torments inflicted on them, the scourgings, the racks, the mutilations, and roastings, no

* *Tweedie*, p. 15.

† *Eccles. Hist. of France*, p. 194. *Laval's Hist. of the Reformation in France*, vol. i. p. 23.

tongue can express, nor any pen adequately describe. At such a time, and in such a country, Servetus and Calvin acted wisely in holding no discussion on topics in which a free expression of opinion would have tied them both to the stake.

In Italy the ministers of the Inquisition were like incarnate fiends in a state of ferocious activity dragging their victims to prison, to torture, and to death. Those who have a fondness to read of such atrocities, may read *M'Crie's History of the Reformation in Italy*, and sup of horrors to satiety. The good, the wise, the learned, the magnanimous were ever the chosen victims—though poverty and obscurity afforded no protection to the humblest mechanic or labourer who had the misfortune to be suspected.

While Servetus dwelt in Paris he published his book entitled *Ratio Syruporum*, by Michael Villanovanus. He assumed this name perhaps under the impression that it would be more favourable to the circulation of his work, than if published with the heretical name of Servetus. It appears to have been well received, and to have given him a high reputation; for, in a work published in Amsterdam, in 1662, on medical writings, it is stated that Michael Villanovanus, who lived in 1537, the year in which this volume first appeared, was “a very learned interpreter of Galen, and a most excellent physician.”

At or about this time he is supposed to have paid a visit to Italy, where he sojourned for a short season, disseminating his opinions. It was on this occasion that Melancthon wrote the letter already noticed to the senate of Venice, to put them on their guard against his heresies.* It appears also that he was in Italy from passages in the preface to his *Ptolemy's Geography*, and

* Melancthon might have known, while thus anxious to guard his Italian friends, that he was himself, in the judgment of the Inquisitors, a not less dangerous heretic than the Spaniard. “One of the leading charges against Castelvetro, who had incurred all the pains spiritual and temporal decreed against heretics, was that he had translated into Italian a work of Melancthon on the authority of the Church and the Fathers, a copy of which, said to be in his own hand-writing, was produced on the trial.”—*M'Crie's Hist. of the Reformation in Italy*, p. 246.

also in his *Restitutio Christianismi*, in which he states that he saw the pope carried on the shoulders of his most eminent courtiers through the streets of Rome, and adored by all the people on bended knees, and that they who could approach near enough to kiss his feet or his shoes deemed themselves blest beyond all others; that many indulgences were procured by purchase, and by them the pains of hell for many years remitted. This sight provoked his deep indignation, and he exclaims, “*O Bestiam bestiarum sceleratissimam, meretricem impudentissimam!*”

After being admitted Doctor of Medicine, Servetus was fully occupied, not only by his professional pursuits, but by lecturing on geography and mathematics in the Lombard college; by his preparing for the press a new edition of *Ptolemy's Geography*, with some medical tracts, and an apology for himself in consequence of a dispute with the physicians. This dispute, we may conjecture, was caused by his questioning some theories of his professional brethren, or by his originating some opinion which they may have deemed a medical heresy—for a man of his ardent temperament and inquisitive genius could not easily be tied down to traditionary dogmas in medicine more than in theology. “This dispute,” says Wright, “rose to a process before parliament, which was terminated by a suppression of the Doctor's apology, and an order of the house to the physicians to live on better terms with him, and to use him with humanity. This implies that their treatment of him had been reprehensible,”—and possibly not unmingled with a few scruples of bigotry, and *quantum sufficit* of *odium theologicum*.

Leaving Paris in 1535, Servetus went to Lyons where he maintained himself by being a corrector of the press, an occupation at that time entrusted only to men of superior abilities and erudition. He was there employed by the eminent printers the Trechselii, to edit an edition of *Ptolemy's Geography*, which appeared in that year, and was afterwards reprinted in 1542.

In the preface to this work he gives a brief historical

account of Ptolemy, whom he extols as a geographer above Strabo, Pliny, and Pomponius Mela. He mentions the care and industry which he had employed in examining and comparing manuscripts, and in restoring the true reading of many passages that had been corrupted. "He illustrated the most difficult with annotations, and explained the antiquated names of places, together with the customs and manners of the inhabitants, according to the fashion of that day among the learned. The second edition of this work, augmented and corrected, was published in 1542."*

The masterly manner in which this work was edited was highly creditable to his scholarship, and added not a little to his literary reputation. In the margin of this edition he inserted his own scholia, which, as Allwoerden testifies, contain ample proof of his familiarity with the Greek and Roman writers, of his knowledge of mathematics, and the then recent discoveries in geography and astronomy. He throws light on the obscurities of his author, corrects his errors, notes the various readings, gives the modern names of ancient cities, and makes particular mention of such as were distinguished by any remarkable event. The style is elegant and polished—while the matter displays the multifarious reading of the editor.

Having completed his editorial labours in Lyons he removed to Avignon, and at last settled at Carlieu where he practised medicine about three years, and thence proceeded to pursue his profession at Vienne in Dauphiny.

His change of residence laid him open to the suspicion of those who were on the watch to detect a blemish in his conduct, that he had committed some offence, or, as Chauffpie has it "some blunder," which made such a change necessary. When he left Basil in 1530 or 1531 it was reported that he had been rendered uncomfortable by the vituperative criticisms of the theologasters—for, like his predecessors of old, he was "everywhere spoken

* *Month. Rep.* 1810, p. 222.

against.”* It was even said that he was obliged by the magistracy to withdraw, or, in other words, that he was banished. But for these reports there is no other foundation than the malignity of his enemies. On the contrary, in the letter addressed by Œcolampadius to the magistrates, in compliance with their request to know his opinion of the work of Servetus, while he condemns its doctrines, he speaks of the author in handsome terms as of a good man,† and one who was willing to retract his errors as soon as they became known to him, and that his mistakes were not of such magnitude as not to merit forgiveness. Moreover, the clergy of Basil in their letter to those of Geneva, 18th Oct., 1553, say not a word about his expulsion from their city—which they would scarcely have failed to notice had it ever occurred. Those who ascribe his removal from Carlieu to some misdemeanour, are at no pains to inform us of its nature. “*Hic nescio,*” says Allwoerden, “*quod commisit facinus ut diutius subsistere non potuerit.*” If the biographer knew not the crime, wherefore suppose that any was committed? Can a medical gentleman have no reason for quitting one locality in favour of another, but the commission of some iniquity? What if he had exhausted the field of his profession, and wished for a new field where he could be more extensively useful? What if he wished for more agreeable society, or if the state of his own health suggested that a change of air and of scene might be beneficial? Physicians often recommend such changes to their patients, and wherefore may they not follow their own recommendations, and from a variety of causes, change their place of abode without any imputation on their character?

* Passim in hujus ævi Theologorum Scriptis diæta occurrunt, quibus acriter in eum ejusque doctrinam invehuntur.—*Allw.* 31.

† “Ego sane diligenter perlustrato eo, reperio longe potuisse melius locare operam BONUM ILLUM VIRUM—ille qui errores scripsit eosdem agnitos scriptis retractaret.”

CHAPTER III.

Servetus.—His friendship and residence with Palmier, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Vienne.—Prepares an edition of the Bible.—Frellon the bookseller induces him to open a correspondence with Calvin.—Proposes to him three questions.—Calvin offended.—Change of names.—Servetus criticises Calvin's Institutions.—Calvin, enraged, threatens Servetus with death.—Servetus anticipates his fate.—His letter to Abel Papinus.—Prints his *Restitutio Christianismi*.—Sketch of Calvinism.

SERVETUS, while in Lyons, had the good fortune to renew his acquaintance with Peter Palmier, the Archbishop of Vienne, who had been his friend or pupil when prosecuting his studies at Paris. Being a man of letters, and capable of appreciating the literary and scientific accomplishments of Servetus, he pressed him to settle at Vienne, there to follow his profession, and that he should have apartments in the archiepiscopal palace. Such a kind and friendly offer was not to be rejected. Accordingly he remained for the space of thirteen years at Vienne, occupied in learned studies and professional duties. Notwithstanding the difference of creed between a Roman Catholic archbishop and a Christian Unitarian, the length of their residence together may be regarded as a proof of their mutual good will, and of their having a bond of union in brotherly-kindness and charity stronger than identity of belief in questions of faith. There were innumerable points on which they could agree, and as to those on which they were obliged to differ, they would only lead to amicable discussion, by which both might be profited and entertained. In the then state of Christendom it is delightful to behold, even in a single instance, the hostility of adverse principles in religion neutralized or annihilated by the superior influence of Christian love—and private friendship cherished amidst the conflicts of religious bigotry and intolerance.

Servetus revised and edited a second edition of his *Ptolemy's Geography*, which, in testimony of his friendship and gratitude, he dedicated to his friend the Archbishop.

During his residence at Vienne he made frequent journeys to Lyons, to revise an edition of *Pagnini's Latin Bible*,* printed by Hugo de la Parte, to which he wrote a preface and marginal notes, and received for his trouble the sum of 500 livres. Robinson informs us that "Calvin was pleased to pronounce the notes impertinent and impious; but wiser men than he have thought the contrary." Of this it may be deemed a sufficient proof, that in the Polonian edition of the Bible, prepared for the press by men of distinguished learning, many notes by Servetus were inserted.† But Calvin being himself a commentator of no small notoriety, may have considered all comments except his own superfluous, and those which did not harmonize with his doctrines in the Institutes, as impertinent and impious—those especially of so great a heresiarch as Servetus.

Among the admirers of Calvin was one Frellon, a bookseller of Lyons, for whom Servetus translated some treatises on grammar from Latin into Spanish, and acted also as corrector of the press, but did not concur with him in admiration of the Reformer. D'Artigny says, "Servetus had examined the works of Calvin very carefully, and not finding they deserved the great reputation they had acquired among the reformed, he consulted him not so much to be instructed by him as to perplex him." For, Frellon, probably with a view to bring Servetus round to his own sentiments, induced him to open a correspondence with Calvin. He may have hoped that the

* The title of this Bible is BIBLIA SACRA LATINA, *ex Hebræo; per SANTEM PAGNINUM*, cum Prefatione et Scholiis MICHAELIS VILLANOVANI. *Lugduni a Porta*, 1542, in fol. Or as it is given, perhaps more correctly, by Allwoerden—Biblia Sacra ex SANCTIS PAGNINI translatione, sed et ad Hebraicæ Linguæ amussim ita recognita et Scholiis illustrata, ut plane nova Editio videri possit. *Lugduni apud HUGONEM a PORTA*, 1542, fol.

In fine voluminis hæc verba leguntur: Exeudebat CHASPAR TRESSEL. BURE N. 36. Le mérite de cette édition consiste, dans les notes marginales dont elle est ornée, et qui sont du fameux Michel Servet: les exemplaires en ont été supprimés et défendu avec soin, ce qui les a rendu rares; et la valeur en augmente en France, depuis que le mérite de sa rareté y est mieux connu.—*Robinson*.

† BIBLIA POLONICA. BURE N. 79. Les personnes employées par ce Prince (Radzivil) à la rédaction de l'ouvrage, furent Pierre Stator, Simon Zacijs, Gregoire Orsacius, André Tricesius, Jaques Lublinius, et plusieurs autres chefs Unitaires, ou Sociniens, parmi lesquels l'on compte même le fameux MICHEL SERVET, duquel on a inséré quantité de morceaux séparés que l'on trouva dans les papiers de ce célèbre heresiarche.

Reformer himself would remove all difficulties, and defend his doctrines, when impugned, with an eloquence that would enforce conviction. Servetus having no objection to comply with Frelon's request, addressed Calvin, and proposed to him three questions:—the first, concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ—the second, of regeneration—and the third, of baptism.* The answers to these questions not proving satisfactory, Servetus animadverted on them in a style by no means complimentary. Calvin, who, as Robinson states, “had been used to treat with believers, not inquirers, felt his oracular dignity hurt,† for with divines of Calvin's cast, implicit belief of all they say is humility.” Under the assumed name of Charles D'Espeville, he wrote to Frelon, accusing Servetus of pride and arrogance, and declining all farther communication. This letter is dated the 13th of February, 1546.

Calvin reproached Servetus for changing his name while at Vienne to Villaneuva, or Villanovanus, for which he was fully as justifiable as his reproacher for changing his name from Cauvin to Calvin, and writing under the feigned signature of Charles D'Espeville. Had the great Reformer forgotten the searching question of one who asked, “Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the splinter that is in thine own eye?” Villanova had been the early residence, perhaps the estate, of the family of Servetus, and this was a good reason for his assumption of the name. Moreover, it was no unusual practice of the Reformers to change the names by which they were vulgarly known, to others of a more classical or euphonical sound. Thus Schwartzerd, which signifies *black earth*, the original German name of a celebrated reformer, was changed into the Greek compound of the same signi-

* 1. An homo Jesus crucifixus sit filius Dei, et quæ sit hujus filiationis ratio ?

2. An regnum Christi sit in hominibus; quando quis ingrediatur, et quando regeneretur ?

3. An baptismus Christi debeat in fide fieri sicut cæna; et quorsum hæc instituta sint fœdere novo?—*Robinson*, p. 334.

† As who should say—“I am Sir Oracle,
And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark.”

fication, viz. MELANCTHON. Reuchlin, from the German *Reuch*, which signifies *smoke*, was changed into CAPNIO, from a Greek word of the same signification. Hausschein—anglice—*Houselight*—was græcised into ŒCOLAMPADIUS.* Erasmus called himself *Roterodamus*, from the city in which he was born.—“In his youth he took the name of Erasmus, having before gone by that of Gerard, which, in the German language, means *amiable*. Following the fashion of learned men of those times, who affected to give their names a Latin or a Greek turn, he called himself *Desiderius*, which in Latin, and *Erasmus*, which in Greek, hath the same signification.”†

While in Vienne Servetus followed the practice of medicine, and there kept up a friendly literary intercourse with a physician named Delavau. Patinus, who records this fact, states that fifty letters from Servetus to the father of Delavau were extant, and that they had all been seen by Scaliger; but what were their nature and contents we are not informed. From this place he also sent a book to Calvin in Geneva, in which he freely criticised and condemned various errors of doctrine which he had detected in the “Institution” of the Reformer. That book Allwoerden suspects to have been similar to his *Restitutio Christianismi*, as it contained much of the

* Beza, the friend of Calvin, was less fortunate in his name—which in German signifies *evil*, and in Hebrew *an egg*—*Hebræis idem est quod Latinis ovum*. One of Beza’s biographers takes pains to inform him that *ovum* (an egg,) must not be mistaken for *ovem* (a sheep). For that he is truly the egg of a dunghill hen, or rather of an asp, such as is spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, ch. lix. 5.—They hatch cockatrice’ eggs and weave the spider’s web. He that eateth of the eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

His name gave occasion to several epigrams of which the following are specimens:—

Ovum significat Judæo nomine Beza,

Germanis signat dictio ^obſc malum.

Beza unus scelere ante alios inmanior omnes,
Hæreticus pungit quos agitatque furor.

† *Jortin’s Life of Erasmus*.

A similar fondness for the adoption of significant names, as Hume informs us, prevailed among the pretended saints in the time of the “Commonwealth.” Hence such names as *Praise-God Barebone*, *Kill-sin Pimple*, *Weep-not Billing*. See in *Hume* the list of the Sussex jury, all of whom are designated by such epithets. “Cromwell,” says an anonymous author of these times, “hath beat up his drums through the Old Testament. You may learn the genealogy of our Saviour by the names of his regiment. The muster master has no other list, than the first chapter of St. Matthew.”

same matter which is to be found in the latter work, and which Calvin produced against him at his trial. The freedom, and probably the justice of his animadversions excited a fierce and inextinguishable resentment in the breast of the Reformer.

Had a kind and friendly feeling subsisted between Servetus and Calvin, they might, by their co-operation, have greatly promoted the cause of the Reformation: but both were too high-spirited to yield. Neither seemed disposed to make any concession to the other, lest it should be considered as a weakness. Servetus would not bend to the dictation of Calvin, and Calvin thought his position in society, as a preacher of the gospel, entitled him to a degree of subserviency which priests of all denominations are too well inclined to demand, but which men of independent mind are by no means disposed to pay. Servetus felt that he had as valid a right as Calvin to express and maintain his own opinions, and that religious questions were not to be decided by priestly authority, but by reason and Scripture, and candid discussion. It was galling to the pride of Calvin to have the truth of any of his dogmas questioned by one of the laity; and though he affects to treat the objections of Servetus to some of his doctrines and criticisms with contempt, the pains he takes to refute them afford abundant proof that they had made an impression, and were not so contemptible as to be unworthy of ample consideration. Had Servetus sacrificed his own convictions, confessed that he was in error, and lauded Calvin for his superior knowledge of Scripture, and as deserving to stand at the head of all Reformers, he would have been hailed as a friend and ally in the cause of reform, instead of being denounced as an enemy, and condemned to the flames. Each of these doughty and stalwart polemics exasperated the other by the keenness of his animadversions, as if the strife were who could give the greater provocation. Servetus treats Calvin as a falsifier, and Calvin speaks of Servetus as of one demented; and says that he often endeavoured to bring him to a right mind, but in vain;—that is, he laboured

to make him confess himself in error contrary to his own conviction that he was right. He lauds his own moderation, while he condemns the want of that virtue in his antagonist. Servetus, he says, as if seized with madness, *quasi hippomanes hausisset*, laid hold of his books wherever he could find them, stuffed them with vituperation, and left not a page of them free from his vomit. When Calvin found he had so incorrigible an opponent, by whom he was in danger of total discomfiture, he sought refuge in silence, and remained, he says, as unmoved by the clamours of Servetus, as by the braying of an ass.* Servetus tells Calvin that his arguments confute himself—that he cuts his throat with his own sword. Calvin retorts in a similar style; and seldom, indeed, does he mention the name of Servetus without coupling it with some abusive epithet expressive of the venom (*pus atque venenum*) fermenting in his breast. In his comments on the Scriptures, in his Institution and other works, he calls him repeatedly a dog—a proud, unclean, Spanish dog—a destructive monster—a prodigious villain—fascinated by the execrable delirium of the Manichæans—the great glory of the Anabaptists—possessed by the spirit of the devil—the son of perdition who was recently burned—who belched out his impieties like a second Mahomet.†

The “*Christian Institution*,” as he termed it, was the great work of Calvin—the *magnum opus* on which he

* Ipse vero quasi hippomanes hausisset, quosumque meos libros nau-eisi potuit, non destitit insulsis conuitiis facere, ut nullam paginam a suo vomitu puram relinqueret. Mihi interea nihil melius visum fuit quam tacere. Sciunt etiam familiares mei, non magis quam asini ruditu, me fuisse commotum.—*Calvini Opp.*, Tom. viii. p. 517.

† Diabolus furor impuri canis Serveti—Clarum est illum Diabolico spiritu agitatum esse—Manichæorum delirium quo fascinatus fuit Servetus—prodigiosus nebulo—exitiale monstrum—illius impuri qui nuper fuit exustus—hæc eructabat ille perditus, tanquam alter Mahometes.

In forming bouquets of such flowers of theological rhetoric Calvin has seldom been excelled by any of his disciples; though they cannot be accused fairly of wanting either taste or industry in emulating the example of their leader. They also see farther into the origin of things than would be readily suspected. The Rev. W. K. Tweedie, for instance, assures us that “the Christian will at once detect that Calvin’s controversy is that which began between Cain and Abel.” He might also have informed us that it was terminated much in a similar way to that of the two brothers. The one who was assailed fell a victim;—the murderous assailant was permitted to live.

rested his fame as a theologian and divine.—It is undoubtedly a work of great labour and learning, and the favour with which it has been generally received, may be admitted as a strong testimony in behalf of its literary merits. The dedicatory epistle to the king of France has been particularly admired as one of the finest specimens of Latin composition. But the doctrines it advocates show how little the genius and spirit of Christianity were felt or understood by its author.* The doctrine especially of Predestination and Eternal Decrees, is so much at variance with the gospel—so absolutely contradictory to the justice, the benevolence, the paternal character of the Deity, as taught by him who was “sent into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved,” that it seems strange it should ever have been received with the slightest approbation. That such tenets as those which form the staple of Calvinistic divinity should continue to be held by any church, or by any body of men calling themselves Christians, is a melancholy proof how deeply the poison of Calvinism has infected their minds, and how much they

* Spondanus, on the authority of another writer, speaks thus of Calvin's Institution:—

“'Twas at Angoulesme where CALVIN, to ensnare Christianity, began his Institution, or rather, as it deserves to be called, the Alcoran or Talmud of heresies, being a bundle of all the errors that have been, or, I believe, that ever will be, which he collected out of Melancthon, Hyperius, and Sarcier. The Lutheran Westphalus saith, 'tis only Æcolampadius's doctrine, a little disguised and improved.”

Bayle is far from admitting that there is any truth or justice in this criticism. He says of Calvin's Institution, that “There is a mastery throughout the whole work, and such a superiority of genius, that this accusation must of necessity be exploded by all discerning judges.”—*Bayle's Dictionary*.

Much is it to be lamented that “such superiority of genius” was not employed in advocating the great truths of the gospel. But Calvin was no gospel writer nor gospel preacher. We learn from a work on the Moral Sense, by Dr. J. A. Smith, published in New York, that “Calvin in his time, preached *nineteen hundred and twenty-four sermons*, and not one of them from either of the four Gospels! Surely gospel Christianity and the religion of Calvin must have been somewhat different things, when he was so careful, during his whole career, to keep them apart.”—*The Bible Christian*, Montreal, July, 1847.

It was said of Calvin that he showed what spirit he was of, and how he could give a literal interpretation to figurative language, by having on the title page of the “Institution” the picture of a sword in the midst of flames, with this motto—*non veni mittere pacem, sed gladium*,—“I came not to send peace, but a sword.” It was, however, remarkably appropriate both to the book and its author.

have to unlearn before they can understand or appreciate the soul-saving truths of the gospel.

Calvin's rage against Servetus for presuming to question his infallibility, and condemn as erroneous any of the favourite dogmas of his book, was not to be suppressed. Whatever resentment he felt—whatever desire of vengeance he cherished, he was too magnanimous to conceal. He was no hypocrite, but expressed openly and boldly both what he thought of Servetus, and how he would handle him if ever he should come within his reach, persuading himself, perhaps, that he would do not only a justifiable, but a meritorious act if he should accomplish his destruction.

Bolsec affirms that in the year 1546 Calvin wrote to Peter Viret, that if Servetus should go to Geneva, he would never suffer him to depart alive; and we learn from the same authority, that, not satisfied with giving such utterance to his murderous intentions, he had the name of Servetus reported as a heretic to Cardinal Turnonius, at that time acting in an official capacity in France, well knowing what must be his fate, should he be apprehended as a heretic under papal authority. The cardinal was amused by this proceeding, and, bursting into a laugh, exclaimed, here is one heretic accusing another of heresy.*

That Calvin's threats that he would take the life of Servetus were not idle words, uttered in a moment of excited passion is farther apparent from an original letter of his to Farrel, written in 1546, in which he says: "Servetus has lately written to me, and sent me, at the same time, a large book stuffed with idle fancies, and full of arrogance. He says I shall find in it admirable things, and such as have hitherto been unheard of. He offers to come hither, if I like it, but I will not engage my word; for if he come, and any regard be had to my authority, he shall never escape with his life."

"D'Artigny, who took his materials for the life of Servetus from the undoubted archives of the Archbishop

* This anecdote Allwoerden gives on the authority of Bolsec, without insisting on its truth.—p. 45.

of Vienne, affirms this. Bolsee and Grotius both saw the original letter. Uytendogardt had a copy of it taken from a collection of manuscript epistles, and the panegyrist of Calvin are not able to deny it." They allow the fact, says Robinson—from whom this paragraph is extracted—but they say it was zeal, not revenge, that impelled him to write so. A miserable excuse. Many are the histories of the rage of authors against critics, but this exceeds them all.—A gentleman, he adds, who loves criticism, but hates ill-temper, hath placed Calvin's Institutes among such other books in his library; but he hath written on the top of the title, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

Servetus, unhappily for himself, did go to Geneva, and Calvin, fixed in his cruel purpose, carried his threat into execution. He did not, however, go intentionally or openly, but rather by necessity or accident, as will appear in the sequel. He must have known the temper of his adversaries too well to indulge the hope that he could escape their vengeance, should he have the misfortune to be in their power. There is extant a letter of his to Abel Pepinus, who, from being a Franciscan monk became a preacher of the gospel in Geneva. In this letter he says, that he felt assured he must die for his doctrine; and laments that it is not in his power to make some emendations in the writings he had sent to Calvin. He also shows that we are by no means under the Jewish covenant, but under the milder law of the gospel. The old law was abolished, and we became the sons of God by faith in Christ alone. "But your gospel," says he, "is commingled with the law—your gospel is without One God—without the true faith—without good works. In place of the One God ye have a three-headed Cerberus—for the true faith, a fatal dream—and as for good works, ye call them vain pictures (filthy rags). Your faith in Christ is a mere varnish without efficacy—man, a mere stock—and God, a chimæra of an enslaved will. Divine regeneration by water ye do not acknowledge, but treat as a fable. Ye shut the kingdom of heaven

against men—and, by excluding us from it, treat it as a vain imagination. Alas for you! Alas, alas!” The man who could express himself thus, required no prophetic skill to foresee the fate that awaited him should he ever be caught by the fangs of the Calvinists.

Servetus had now been resident in Vienne for many years, occupied in professional duties, and enjoying, we may presume, the friendship and esteem of his fellow citizens, as well as of the friendly Archbishop. He must have also devoted a portion of his time to theological studies, without, however, entering into controversy or giving offence by the assertion of his peculiar tenets. During this period he completed his principal work, *Christianismi Restitutio*. It is said to have cost him four years' labour, as it well might, considering its magnitude—the very important subjects of which it treated—and the interruptions which his professional pursuits must have caused in its composition. He was naturally unwilling that this work which had cost him so much thought, to which he attached the highest value, and from which, in the fervour of an ardent temperament, he may have expected a glorious result, should pass into oblivion without any attempt to make it known. On the other hand, however, he was fully aware of the danger of publication, knowing as he did the watchful malignity of Calvin and his compeers. He had, moreover, substantial reasons for avoiding all cause of offence or blame among the people of Vienne, many of whom, and especially the Archbishop, were his friends and benefactors. But the love of truth was paramount to all other considerations, and he felt it to be a duty which he owed to God, to do what he could for the restoration of Christianity to its primitive character. The very title of the work indicates that its author was far from thinking that the Reformers had already achieved this task; and as Rilliet (page 67,) truly observes, “With him it was a matter of conscience to manifest to the world the only true principles of the Christian faith, and to fight the good fight of faith against all assailants. One perceives, in reading his work, that

he believed himself to be accomplishing a holy mission—almost a task imposed on him from heaven.’*’

Being at length determined to publish the work the manuscript was sent to Marinus, a German, and a friend of the author, resident in Basil, to have it printed in that city. The bookseller had not courage to venture on the publication, and the manuscript was returned. It was then intrusted to Balthazar Arnoullet, a bookseller in Vienne, and William Gueroult, his brother-in-law and director of his printing press. To them Servetus candidly acknowledged that he had strong reasons for concealing the author’s and the printer’s name, and also that of the city in which it should be printed, and overcame their reluctance to undertake it, by promising that he would himself bear all the expense, correct the proofs, and give each of them a gratuity of a hundred crowns—a considerable sum for that time, and which was probably the well-earned fruit of his medical skill. The work was accordingly executed, and with such secrecy that it was known to none in Vienne.† The copies were sent to Frelon‡ at Lyons, and thence a part of them to Frankfort, and another part was left under the care of Peter Merrin, a caster of types, till an opportunity should offer of sending them to Italy. “Some say there were 800, others a thousand copies printed off. In all probability it would have passed into circulation in Germany and Italy, without either author or printer being detected by the papists, had it not been for the destructive vigilance of the protestants who betrayed the author into the hands of the common enemies of reformed Christianity.”—*Wright*, p. 125.

This last work of Servetus contained 734 pages 8vo,

* The Rev. W. K. Tweedie, from whose book this passage is quoted, was evidently displeased with it, as became a disciple of Calvin. He says, “Such are the opinions of Rilliet;” and adds ironically, “The constancy of Servetus at the stake, proves how profoundly he was convinced that he was attempting what our author here describes.”

† “At the end, however, were the letters M. S. V., standing for *Michael Servetus Villanovanus*. In this volume were inserted thirty letters which had been addressed by Servetus to Calvin.—*Christian Reformer*.”

‡ It is stated that Frelon privately abstracted some copies and forwarded one to Calvin at Geneva. From the copy thus surreptitiously obtained, he extracted his charges to accomplish the ruin of his adversary.

and bore the following title:—*Christianismi Restitutio, &c.; i. e.* “The Restitution of Christianity; *h. e.* A call to the Christian world, to the primitive principles of the Apostolical Church; or a Treatise wherein the knowledge of God, of the Christian faith, of our justification, regeneration, baptism, of eating the Lord’s Supper, are perfectly restored; to the deliverance of the heavenly kingdom from the slavery of impious Babylon, and the utter destruction of Antichrist with his followers. M.DLIII.”

Robinson says that “The whole of this work is a delineation of what Servetus thought the discipline of the New Testament, along with that of the Church of Rome, and the Lutheran and Calvinistic Seceders in contrast.” La Roche gives a general account of the work, observing that Servetus was neither an Arian nor a Photinian, —that he asserted not only the pre-existence of Christ, but also that Christ is not a creature nor a being of a finite power, but true God, and that he ought to be worshipped as such;* that he expresses himself so confusedly, that ’tis no easy thing to have a notion of his doctrine; that he calls it a mystery unknown to the world, but at the same time owns that those who acknowledge Christ to be only the Messiah and the Son of God as he is a man, may attain to salvation—he expresses, on all occasions, a great indignation against the Church of Rome, and takes it to be the beast mentioned in the Apocalypse. In confirmation of this account, La Roche selects some passages which he affirms would have been sufficient to move the Roman

* If La Roche be correct in this account, Servetus seem to have kept pretty close to orthodoxy in one important article, though widely dissenting from what it recognizes as the proper doctrine of the Trinity. The following is the Latin title of the work.

“CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO, hoc est, totius ecclesiæ Apostolicæ ad sua limina vocatio, in integrum restitutâ cognitione Dei, fidei Christi, Justificationis nostræ regenerationis, baptismi, et cœnæ Domini manducationis: restituto denique nobis regno cœlesti, Babylonis impiæ captivitate soluta et Antichristo eum suis penitus destructo. M.DLIII.”

The first part, which treats of the Trinity, is headed thus:—“De Trinitate divina, quod in eâ non sit indivisibile trium rerum illusio, sed vera substantiæ Dei manifestatio in verbo, et communicatio in spiritu.”

The curious reader may see in the *Monthly Repository* for 1810, p. 526, an analysis of the work composed “from manuscript papers of S. Crellius more fully than has yet been published, either by Mosheim or Bœchlius.”

Catholics to put its author to death though he had not denied the Trinity. Servetus appears very devout through the whole book, and concludes his discourse concerning the LX. *signs of the reign of Antichrist*, with these words, “Whosoever believes the Pope to be Antichrist, may also truly believe that the Papistic trinity, pædobaptism, and other sacraments of popery are the doctrines of demons. O! Christ Jesu, Son of God, O! most merciful Redeemer, who hast so often delivered thy people from their distresses, deliver us, miserable as we are, from this Babylonish captivity of Antichrist, from his hypoerisy, tyranny, and idolatry. Amen.”*

The state of Christendom in the days of Servetus called loudly for reformation, for “Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.” The restoration of Christianity to its original beauty, simplicity, and power, was a magnificent idea, and all good and wise men who had been favoured with only a glimpse of its primitive character, must have been delighted with the hope that it would one day be restored. Genuine Christianity had disappeared, and its place was supplied by a heterogeneous mixture of heathen superstitions and theological terms having little or no affinity with the religion taught by Christ and his Apostles. Instead of the One God of the Bible, who is a spirit and to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, they had a Trinity composed of three distinct persons or hypostases, of which the only intelligible notion is that each person is an intelligent being, and if each be God, there must be three Gods, and consequently the doctrine is Tritheism, however positively denied by those who hold it. Such it was unquestionably affirmed to be by Servetus, and hence the scornful epithets by which he designated the objects of their worship. He felt as Elijah felt when he dealt his withering sarcasms, like forked lightnings, among the priests of Baal:—his spirit was stirred within him like the great Apostle’s when he saw the city wholly abandoned to idolatry. He saw the families of the *Dii*

* “Servetus believed that the reign of Antichrist began in the fourth century, if not sooner.”

majorum and minorum gentium still subsisting under different names. Satan instead of Pluto reigned in the infernal regions, and the Virgin Mary was invested with the power and the attributes of Venus, and worshipped as the queen of heaven and the mother of God! Such had been the honour once paid to her, that it was proposed to make her one of the persons of the trinity. Her influence in heaven was supposed to be unbounded; and instead of "One Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," there were thousands of angels and archangels, with the spirits of deified men and women, to whom prayers were addressed and divine honours paid. The common people were deluded and mystified, then, as they are in many places, now, with accounts and exhibitions of pretended miracles. A spiritual despotism had been erected that tyrannized with remorseless cruelty over both the bodies and the minds of men. The use of the Scriptures was prohibited, and the expression of any religious opinion not having the sanction of Rome, was branded with the name of heresy, and led the unfortunate heretic to expiate his offence at the stake. At length, as if the spirit of evil had been invested with power to reign over the earth, and try how far it was possible to degrade and crush the human mind, and trample down the dearest rights and liberties of man, the infernal tribunal of the Inquisition was established, and men pretending to be the chosen vessels of God, the ministers elect of the benevolent Jesus, exercised their ingenuity to invent new modes and instruments of torture—new combinations of levers and pullies, of wedges and screws, to dislocate the joints and tear the nerves and sinews of human beings asunder, to force confession of suspected or impossible crimes. The sale of "indulgences," granting forgiveness to the violation of every command of the Decalogue, filled the cup of pontifical iniquity. This was not to be borne. Who, that had not the soul of a slave, in whose bosom all Christian sentiments, all moral feelings were not extinct, could endure it? Luther arose; he protested against the foul misdeeds of the Man of sin. Many of the subjects of

Rome, both of the clergy and laity, protested and determined to break loose from the degrading yoke, which they had borne too patiently and too long. They opened the sacred volume and dared to inspect its contents. As they read they acquired new thoughts, they felt new energies stirring within them, new light dawning on their minds. They found that they had been kept in shameful ignorance of their rights and their duties. They threw off their allegiance to papal authority. They determined to be free from human dictation in religion, and to own no master and judge but Christ. All this was well—and would have been better had they adhered to their principles. They did much for the good of man and for his redemption from spiritual bondage. But they did not do enough. They stopped short in their glorious career, and instead of claiming for themselves and granting to others all the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, they still felt a hankering for some of their old traditions, as the Israelites for the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt. They cherished too much respect for the decrees of General Councils, and the dogmas of the Fathers—a race of men of whom some few were distinguished for piety—some for learning—many, or almost all, for superstition and that love of the marvellous which is characteristic of minds undisciplined by the exercise of reason. They thought it necessary that religion, instead of inculcating great principles and leaving the mind free to develop and apply them, should have a fixed and determinate formula of faith and practice. Christ taught that all the law and the prophets hang upon the two great commandments of love to God and love to man, without prescribing the exact modes in which obedience to these commands is to be manifested. He taught no metaphysics—he constructed no system—he insisted on no belief of unintelligible and incomprehensible mysteries—nor did he enjoin his disciples to think there was any merit in laying human reason prostrate. The Reformers had not learned this. They thought creeds and confessions of faith indispensable—not merely as aids to the study of theology and scripture,

but as tests of orthodoxy which ought to be subscribed and from which it was heretical to dissent. They did not deem it enough to subscribe, or profess belief in the Scriptures; they added that belief in their interpretation of Scripture was equally necessary; that they should be trusted and received as the accredited messengers and true expounders of the oracles of the Most High. They denied the infallibility of the pope, but in fact claimed it for themselves. Several of the Reformers wished to have a little popedom of their own; and, to add to their strength and authority, entered into close alliance with the kings and potentates of the earth. They called in the aid of the civil magistrate to enforce the adoption of their creeds, and to punish the rejection of them with confiscation of property, imprisonment, and death. They thought the arm of flesh necessary to aid the finger of God, and a sword of steel the most efficient ally of the sword of the spirit.*

Servetus saw not less clearly than the most eminent of the Reformers, the necessity of a reformation; and his *CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO* demonstrates how earnest he was both in his wishes and endeavours to promote it. That work, it has been observed, “embraces all the

* Calvinism is justly chargeable not only with fostering the grossest hypocrisy in numbers, but of causing men of honest and sincere minds to renounce Christianity altogether, or to fall back into the ranks of Popery. Monsieur Papin of Blois, is a remarkable instance of the latter. From being a Protestant he felt himself compelled to turn to the Roman Catholic church, by the intolerant and persecuting principles of the Calvinists. In his answer to Jurieu, A.D. 1733, he says, “The right they attribute to themselves to treat others as *Heretics*, to anathematise, to east out of employment, to deery among the people, and even to cause to be repressed by the magistrate such as do not explain the Scripture as they do; this right, I say, appeared to me suspended in the air, destitute of any foundation, or to express it better, it appeared to me that it overthrew the religion topsie-turvey, and condemned all their party.”—pp. 25, 26.

Happily for the world and the interests of religion, Calvinism, though it has lost nothing of its malignity, has lost much of its influence. It is long since subscription to its Confessions met with a sturdy and successful opposition, even in Geneva, its strong citadel. Christianity and Calvinism differ from each other as light from darkness—and they are wide as the poles asunder. “What concord hath Christ with Belial?—What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?”

The Dissenters’ Chapels Bill, has given Calvinism *a shove in the right direction*. None should be more grateful to a liberal and patriotic legislature, for passing that Bill than the Calvinists, since it was passed just in time to rescue them from the guilt of perpetrating a series of flagitious aggressions on the rights and properties of Christians.

ideas, theoretical and practical, by which Servetus proposed to displace the monstrous errors of the Romish Church, and the pretended reforms of the Protestant doctors, both being equally opposed, according to him, to the spirit of the Gospel and to primitive Christianity. This work was less the exposition of a definite heresy, than a complete plan of reform; and if it had been able to force itself into publicity, the effect would perhaps have been great, and the name of Servetus would not have awakened, as now, only the idea of anti-Trinitarian.”*

Mosheim says of Servetus, that “he seemed to be seized with a passion for reforming (in his way), and many things concurred to favour his designs, such as the fire of his genius, the extent of his learning, the power of his eloquence, the strength of his resolution, the obstinacy of his temper, and an external appearance, at least of piety, that rendered all the rest doubly engaging. Add to all this, the protection and friendship of many persons of weight in France, Germany, and Italy, which Servetus had obtained by his talents and abilities, both natural and acquired, and it will appear that few innovators have set out with a better prospect of success.”†

Of all the Reformers, as well as of Servetus, it may be said, that “they seemed to be seized with a passion for reforming (each in his way)” —for each had his own views, and those of Servetus had as fair claim to consideration as any of them—perhaps a superior claim, since he was not the slave of any religious party, nor the disciple of any school of dogmatic theology. What had he to expect from writing and printing a book of which he could avow the authorship only at the peril of his life? Nothing but the irrepressible love of what he deemed sacred truth, could be his prevailing motive—and a knowledge of this, as well as of his genius and learning, gave him a claim to be heard.

Mosheim speaks of the religious system of Servetus as “singular, strange, chimerical.” It was not more so, however, than a multitude of systems by men of far

* *Rillicet*, p. 69.

† *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. iii. p. 567.

less learning and genius, and with no particle of his honesty. "His notions, with regard to the Supreme Being, and a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, were obscure and chimerical beyond all measure."?—Assuredly they could not be more absurd and chimerical than those of the Athanasian creed, nor could their claim to veneration, and to their adoption by the great divines of Christendom, be less valid or obligatory.

Whatever might be the merits or demerits of the *CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO*, it was doomed, like its author, to a fate far different from that of the *INSTITUTION* of Calvin, though better adapted, perhaps, with all its defects and imperfections, whatever they might be, to promote the great design for which it was written. The malignant industry of its enemies has nearly, if not altogether effected its extinction, while the *Institution* of Calvin survives to enjoy the praises of minds like his own, who laud it to the skies as one of the noblest efforts of theological acumen. The Rev. W. K. Tweedie calls it the "magnificent production of *consecrated* intellect." "Pure religion," he says, "had become almost the sole possession of a kind of Pariah caste, whose opinions led to the same results as the skins of wild beasts with which the early Christians were covered in the gardens of Nero—they occasioned their torture and death." To one who did not know where this passage is to be found, it would appear to be applicable only to those who were endeavouring to restore the worship of the only living and true God, and who, in consequence, became the objects of merciless persecution, and not to those who, pretending to reform religion, claimed a right to exterminate heresy by fire and sword. Notwithstanding the praises which it extorted from the vanquished prejudices of Popery, its "fluency, its point, and its poetic honey," "it was condemned by the Parliament of Paris to be reduced to ashes as containing 'damnable, pernicious, and heretical doctrine.' The Inquisition re-echoed the condemnation. The Koran and the Talmud of heresy were names by which it became known."*

* *Tweedie's Life of Calvin*, pp. 18, 19.

The system of Calvin has been compared to the Sabine institutions in which king Numa had been instructed, and which Livy terms *disciplinam tristem et tetricam*. But no institutions, whether Sabine, Roman, or Spartan, ever matched in cruelty and injustice the *horrible decree* ascribed by Calvin to the Father of all—nor is any system of theology more productive of hypocrisy and infidelity, nor more fatal to the exercise of all the tender charities. As tyrannical and oppressive governments produce discontent insurrection and revolution; so do false and cruel systems of belief, like Calvinism, lead men either to throw off all the restraints of morality and all belief in a God of justice and mercy, or to seek for another religion more accordant to truth and to the constitution of man. No one who has learned so much of the religion of nature as to believe that there is one God supremely just, and wise, and good, can have any faith in the doctrines of Calvinism, which ascribes to the Almighty such motives and principles of action as can properly belong only to the spirit of evil, but which it is blasphemous to ascribe to the Author of all good. No wonder that hundreds and thousands should flee to Natural religion as to an asylum from the mind-perplexing, heart-hardening dogmas of Calvin. The feelings of the human heart rise in rebellion against them, and, happily, nature, though often put to the torture, cannot be driven out. She asserts her supremacy even among Calvinists, and compels them, in defiance of their superstitions, to act like human beings. There are few, it is to be hoped, who really believe that only a small number called "*the Elect*," are predestined to salvation—few who think that myriads of the human race, on whom the light of revelation never shone, are, for this reason, doomed to "most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell fire for ever."* Well did Servetus say that the God of the Calvinists was a God of "enslaved will," for their system makes him subject to his own eternal decrees, and by

* *Westminster Confession.*

them he is bound, as the heathen Jove was bound, by necessity and fate. He cannot *freely* pardon a sinner. Before he can forgive a transgression he must have satisfaction—and the satisfaction must be infinite—and made by the sufferings and death of a being in all respects his equal! And notwithstanding that an omnipotent God is crucified and slain by the hands of wicked men, and an infinite satisfaction made, the benefits of this satisfaction extend only to the elect—a handful of rueful creatures compared to the multitudinous generations of the non-elect whom God is “pleased to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath, to the praise of his glorious justice.” Moreover, the system of Calvin contains a blasphemous impeachment (*horresco referens*) of the truth of God, by representing him as having two wills—one of which he hides and the other reveals—for the purpose of deceiving mankind, willing them to believe themselves free, while he holds them fast in infrangible chains, and that they will be saved, though he decreed, ages before they were born, that they should inevitably be damned.

A system of religion falsely thus called—so self-contradictory, so shocking, so outraging every sentiment of veneration and love, to the just and beneficent Father of the human race, and pretending to be founded on a book whose very name of GOSPEL contains a confutation of such enormous impieties, is enough to excite the indignation of every man of common understanding. Nothing but the power of priestcraft and superstition acting on credulity and ignorance, could have led to the supposition that it is a faithful repository of Christian truth, or any thing but a hideous perversion of the doctrines of the ever blessed and glorious Gospel. Just was the condemnation of the Parliament of Paris that it should be reduced to ashes as containing *damnable, pernicious, and heretical doctrine*, and are we now, in the middle of the nineteenth century, to be told in sober earnest, and not in jest sarcastic, that the Institution of Calvin is a “*magnificent production of consecrated intellect*”—consecrated indeed! By whom—and to what?

Say rather that it is the diabolical progeny of a perverted intellect—worthy of consecration in the temple of Pandemonium—and of being laid on the altar of Moloch.—The people of Geneva have long since learned to estimate it at its proper value. Though cruelly priest-ridden for centuries, they at length assumed courage to read the Scriptures with their own eyes, to think and to inquire for themselves. They discovered that Calvin had been too long the god of their idolatry. They determined to throw off the yoke, to turn to the Gospel, and to embrace the very doctrines for which Calvin would have burned them all. They found that Unitarianism, though long proscribed, and vilified, and “every where spoken against,” was the doctrine of the Bible—based, not on the traditions of Fathers, the decrees of General Councils, and the ravings of heresiarchs—not on subtle disquisitions, on sophisms, mysteries, contradictions, and metaphysical jargon about substances and hypostases, but on the plainest and most frequent declarations of Holy Writ. They turned from Calvinism to Christianity—from the God of an “enslaved will” to a God who can freely pardon—from the worship of a Trinity to the worship of the one only living and true God—a God who cannot suffer and who cannot die—whose truth and righteousness are everlasting, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.

CHAPTER IV.

Christianismi Restitutio.—TRIE's correspondence with ARNEY.—Servetus accused of heresy.—His confidential letters to Calvin produced as evidence against him.—Inconsistency of the Reformers, and cruelties of the Inquisition.—Calvin charged with personal hatred.—His treatment of Bolsec and Castellio.—Servetus examined.—Condemned.—Cast into prison.—Escapes.—Burned in effigy.

SERVETUS having completed his *Christianismi Restitutio*, informed the printer, as has been noticed, that he had strong reasons for having the author's name concealed. One principal reason may have been his reluctance to offend the good Bishop who was his friend and benefactor, but whom he could not hope to retain in those characters, should he be publicly branded as the author of a heretical work. Had he committed the book to the flames instead of to the press, he would have shown more worldly wisdom. But the indomitable love of what he believed to be important truth, prevailed over all other considerations. He hoped he might "do good by stealth," without the fame or the danger of being known—or at least, that his work might pass into the hands of friends whom he knew to be well inclined to promote its circulation without bringing the author into jeopardy. He had not appeared before the public as a controversialist for a long time. His former works were forgotten; and he had no suspicion of any latent foe starting from obscurity to arraign him as a heretic, and bring him before the awful tribunal of the Inquisition. Since the date of the letters which had passed between him and Calvin, several years had elapsed, and in the interval he had provoked no hostility. Whatever resentful feelings had been excited by their controversy, they had abundant time to subside and be forgotten. Judging, perhaps, of Calvin by himself, he never dreamed of the possibility of a man of God harbouring an inveterate malice, or such a spirit of revenge as would furnish documents in the shape of letters written in confidence, *sub sigillo secreti*, as would substantiate a charge of

heresy, and condemn him to a cruel and untimely death. If he entertained such thoughts, the event showed how egregiously he was mistaken.

One TRIE, a Lyonese convert to Protestantism, and an admirer of Calvin, had a relation at Lyons named ARNEY who often exhorted Trie to return to the Church from which he had apostatized. Arney's letters were shown to Calvin who, as is generally affirmed, dictated Trie's answers, and, by means of this man, stirred up a persecution against Servetus. Of Trie's letters in reply to Arney three have been preserved. In the first, after thanking his friend for his kind remonstrances, he endeavours to justify himself for the belief which he now holds, as founded on the Scriptures. He then expresses surprise that his friend should reproach the Reformers for having among them no ecclesiastical discipline, since they are more zealous in the correction of vices than all the officials of the Romish Church. He affirms his orthodox belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, and retorting on his correspondent, asks—where is the zeal—where is the wisdom of his own hierarchy, when they suffer their doctrines to be controverted with impunity—when they tolerate a man who utters blasphemies against their religion, and razes it from its foundations—a Spaniard who calls himself Villaneuve, now living at Vienne, whom they suffer to print heretical books of the most dangerous description? As proof of this fact, he sends him the title, index, and the first sheets of his book entitled CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO. He also informs him of the printer's name, and concludes by recommending his friend, instead of judging others, to judge himself, that he may stand acquitted to his own conscience and to the great Judge of all.

This letter, as might be expected, had its intended effect. It was a well feathered and well pointed shaft, and hit the mark at which it was aimed. Arney felt piqued and taunted. The honour of his church was concerned; the stigma should be effaced without delay. He determined to inform the proper authorities of what he had heard; and accordingly communicated the letter,

and the sheets which accompanied it, to Matthew Ory, the Inquisitor, whom Cardinal De Tournon, Archbishop and governor of Lyons, had ordered to come from Rome to watch over the heretics.* Ory, faithful and vigilant in his calling, lost no time in pursuing the game to which he had thus been directed. He examined the letter of Trie and the printed papers, with Benedict Buatier, Vicar-General to the Cardinal; and resolved to apprise this prelate, who was then at his castle of Rousillon, three leagues below Vienne. On the 12th of March, as Chauffpie informs us, the Inquisitor wrote to M. De Villars, the Cardinal's auditor, to inform the prelate of what had occurred. Now that the work was commenced it should be carried on with vigour. If heretics accused the Roman Church with want of vigilance and discipline, and with fostering a heresy in her very bosom, it was time to efface the stigma, and convince the world that her discipline and vigilance had suffered no relaxation. The prelate, in conjunction with his own Vicar-General and the Grand-Vicar of the Archbishop of Vienne, girt himself to the task with alacrity. M. de Maugiron, Lieutenant-General to the king in Dauphiny, was informed of what had occurred, and it was agreed among them that the subject should be forthwith investigated. Accordingly, on the 16th of March, Servetus was summoned to meet the judges in Maugiron's house, there to be interrogated, and to have his papers examined. As this examination terminated in nothing conclusive, farther evidence was required. Ory having seen a part of the printed work was anxious to see the whole, and desired Arney to write to his friend Trie to send him the treatise *Christianismi Restitutio* entire. Trie, in reply to Arney's request, writes as if his former communication had been intended to be private, but since the matter has been disclosed, he prays that it may tend to purge Christianity of such plagues—though he cannot send him the printed book, he can furnish him with more satisfactory evidence. The printed book might be denied by its author, but he

* *Chauffpie.*

cannot deny his own handwriting—proved, as it could be, by two dozen of pieces written by the heretic in question, which had been obtained with no small difficulty from Calvin, to whom they were addressed—documents sufficiently strong to justify the seizure of the person by whom they were composed, and an immediate scrutiny into his conduct by the authorized powers. In a subsequent letter he informs Arney that Balthazar Arnoullet and his brother, William Gueroult, were the printers of the book—a fact of which there were abundant proofs, and which, indeed, they would not deny. He also states that more than twenty-four years had elapsed since Servetus was turned out of the principal churches in Germany, and that the address of a letter of Œcolampadius was SERVETO HISPANO, *neganti Christum esse Dei filium consubstantialem Patri.*

Here was information strong and circumstantial enough to justify the Inquisitors, according to their notions of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, to cite Servetus to appear before their tribunal. Let us, however, pause a moment to ask by what right did those men presume to interrogate him concerning his religious opinions? Wherefore, should not he have the same right and liberty as they, to give utterance to his thoughts on every theological question, without being accountable to any earthly authorities for either their truth or their error? Who invested them with infallibility, or constituted them, or any human being, or assembly of men, to be judges between a man and his maker? It is said in a well-known book, *The Westminster Confession*, that *God is Lord of the Conscience*, a great and all-important truth to which, if the compilers of that confession, with their followers, had adhered, and not usurped the Lordship which they so justly affirmed belongs only to the Almighty, how happy would it have been for themselves, as well as for those who blindly submitted to their usurpation—how happy for the progress of Christian truth, and the practice of Christian virtues? By rendering it imperative on men to subscribe their creeds, they entrenched on the province of the

Almighty. They took from God, and gave to Cæsar. They nullified, as far as they were able, the glorious truth that "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." They gave a virtual denial to this truth, and led men to practise hypocrisy by causing them to pretend a belief in tenets which they could neither believe nor understand. Whatever the Inquisitors of the Roman hierarchy had to plead in behalf of their usurpation, assuredly the Reformers had none. By seizing for their own use what they had taken from the Pope, they stultified themselves, and by their inconsistency, in a great measure defeated the grand design of emancipating the human mind from spiritual tyranny and thralldom.

The Roman Inquisitors, in alliance with wicked kings and potentates, exercised their power with awful effect through ages of ignorance and crime, without seeming to have any "compunctious visitings of nature," or dreaming how dreadfully they violated the laws of God. As they had the power they may have thought that they had also the right, ignorant of the fact that power constitutes no right even when humanely exercised. Theirs was a tyrannical despotism—the most terrible that ever usurped authority over the bodies and the minds of men. They could not endure the least whisper or surmise which they suspected of disaffection to the Holy See. Like tyrants and usurpers of kingly power, who place their safety in a constant use of the exterminating sword against the conspiracies which they have so much reason to dread, they were ever on the alert to discover any symptoms of opposition or dislike to their rule or their faith. Year after year, they immolated innumerable victims without pity or discrimination for age or youth, sex or condition. Husbands with their wives, parents with their children, whole families—whole towns were destroyed—cities and provinces depopulated by the murderous and merciless tribunal, instigated as it was by suspicion, blind zeal, fanaticism, and not seldom by ambition, avarice, and revenge. Its spies, "heart-probers," and "heresy-hunters," were in every corner.

“The Translator of Mosheim informs us* that the missionaries who were sent into the provinces of France, to extirpate heresy, and the Inquisitors who succeeded them, were bound by an oath not only to seek for heretics in towns, houses, cellars, and other lurking places, but also in woods, caves, and fields.” No one, high or low, celebrated or obscure, who ventured to express a thought which they were pleased to interpret as heterodox or heretical, was safe from destruction. “The Dominicans erected first at Tholouse, and afterwards at Carcassone and other places, a tremendous court, before which were summoned not only *heretics* and persons *suspected of heresy*, but likewise all who were accused of *magic, sorcery, Judaism, witchcraft*, and other crimes of that kind.” And not crimes of that kind only, but the crime of giving utterance to physical facts, which could be demonstrated to be as true as that the sun shines, and the tides ebb and flow, if they happened to be at variance with established superstitions. How narrowly did Galileo escape death for having affirmed certain astronomical truths, which no man of science would dare for a moment to question? What would become of our modern geologists if such ruthless and ignorant barbarians, of whom, by the way, the race is not yet extinct, had power to destroy as well as to denounce them? Is it not surprising that none of the holy brotherhood, or confreres of Calvin, have discovered heresy in the circulation of the blood, and damned Servetus for originating a doctrine which may lead to heterodox conclusions, as to the mental and corporal constitution of man? If we had any belief in the doctrine of incarnations and the metempsychosis, we might readily suppose that the Inquisitors were incarnate fiends, let loose for a time to wreak their malice on the human race. Certain it is that when Satan was permitted to make his experiments on the patience of Job, he proved himself but a novice in the art of tormenting, if compared with the officers of the Inquisition. We are shocked to read of the cruelties practised by one

* *Mosheim's Eccl. Hist.* vol. II. p. 570 note.

man, or class of men, or nation, on human beings—of a Busiris who sacrificed on the altar of his idol all strangers whom he could apprehend—of a Mezentius who bound the living to the dead—of a Phalaris with his brazen bull—of the wholesale murders of the Helots by the Spartans—of slave holders shooting, maiming, scourging their slaves to death—of the North American Indians who exhaust their invention in devising exquisite torments for their captives taken in war. But the palm of cruelty may be awarded to the holy officers of the Inquisition, as excelling in cool-blooded atrocity all that history records or imagination feigns, of cannibals, Cyclops, Læstrygones. And what renders their cruelties peculiarly odious and disgusting is their being perpetrated in the name of religion, for the honour of the church, and the glory of God!—not under the influence of excited passion—not from an irritated spirit of revenge, but devised in cool deliberative assemblies, by priests and their minions, who pretended to be acting as ministers of the God of mercy and compassion.

It was currently reported that Calvin himself wrote to Cardinal de Tournon, or to certain of the Inquisitors, urging them to prosecute Servetus for heresy. Yair treats the report as a fable. Calvin himself denied it, and he may be believed. In the first instance he only supplied Trie with evidence on which the prosecution might be founded. He did not with his own hand kindle the fire—he only supplied the fuel, and left it to the executioner to apply the torch. It is quite evident from Trie's letters, that it was Calvin who gave him the information which he sent to Arney; and as the author of an article in the *Christian Reformer* for January, 1847, justly remarks, "There are, in the letters of Trie, very strong grounds of suspicion that they were written at the instigation, and by the dictation of Calvin. Trie had no pretension to literary attainments, and held no post in the church to require the qualifications of a religious instructor; and yet, in his correspondence with his relation at Lyons, he assumes the tone and language of a theologian and controversialist watching over the doc-

trinal purity of the Church, and volunteering his assistance to detect and punish the disseminator of heresy." At first Calvin did not desire the part which he took in the prosecution to be concealed, as is clearly proved by the fact, that the magistrates of Vienne testified, by a messenger whom they sent to Geneva, that Servetus had been thrown into prison at the instigation of their principal preacher, *instinctu supremi prædicatoris*, by whom no other than Calvin could be meant. Servetus himself also distinctly charged Calvin before the judges in full assembly, at his trial in Geneva, with having sent certain leaves of his work to Lyons, to have him arrested and persecuted as a heretic: and, about a fortnight after, of having also sent above twenty letters which he had received from Servetus in confidence, that he might be convicted of heresy and burned alive.* This charge Calvin did not then deny; but some years after the death of his victim, he made an attempt to clear himself from the odium universally attached to his conduct in the transaction. What credit, he asks, can be given to the report that any correspondence took place between him and the Cardinal, two men who differed from each other as much as Christ from Belial? He deems it enough to deny the charge as an unfounded calumny. He adds that four years had elapsed since Servetus belied him—and from whatever real motive, whether to vent his hatred, or that he believed his suspicions well founded, how did it happen that, if it was by Calvin's enmity he was betrayed, he was suffered to pass many years unmolested in the midst of his enemies? And he comes to this conclusion, that either the charge must be false, or that their holy martyr, as he scornfully calls Servetus, stood so high in the estimation of the papists, that his accusation could do him no harm.

All this seems plausible, but it fails to accomplish its design. It may be readily believed that while Servetus remained quiet, pursuing his profession in Vienne, he suffered no molestation from the enmity of the Reformer.

* *Allwoerden*, p. 50; and *La Roche*.

He was possibly forgotten, and might have been suffered to live unnoticed had not Calvin heard of the printing of the *Christianismi Restitutio*. This work rekindled the fire which had become almost extinct. It told Calvin that Servetus, while he lived, would prove a formidable opponent to him and his "Institution." To get rid of him, and of a theological rivalry which might cause him much uneasiness, it would be well to hand him over, now that occasion offered, to the "Holy Inquisition." His agency in this affair would show his zeal for the orthodox faith, and the rival whom he could not overcome by a goose-quill, would fall to rise no more beneath the torch and the faggot.

Though it cannot be proved that Calvin made the first move in the persecution, there is room for strong suspicion; and it cannot be denied that, when Tric gave information to Arney, Calvin lent him all the assistance in his power, and, in fact, furnished the evidence on which Servetus was convicted.

Yair, and the other friends of Calvin, are anxious to rescue their master from the odium of his being actuated by feelings of personal dislike or revenge. It was only to the heretical opinions of Servetus that he was an enemy! But who made him an arbiter in questions of doctrine? Was not Calvin himself, in the estimation of those who had for centuries exercised the power of judging in such matters, a greater heretic than Servetus? The falsehood and hypocrisy of religious persecutors is always disgusting. They pretend that they have no dislike to the persons of those whom they torture by every act of cruelty. Oh! no. It is love for their good—a tender anxiety for their soul's salvation! Holy men! Honest conservators of the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them! Pious saints of "consecrated intellect"—they would not be guilty of the crime of murder—they would not stain their pure hands with blood. They would only subject the "deniers of the God who bought them," to tortures the most exquisite that can be endured with a retention of life, and then hand them over to the

civil powers to complete the process which they had begun!

If there be any truth in the allegations of Inquisitors and persecutors that they are not actuated by feelings of personal hostility, wherefore do they not use all their endeavours to extinguish the heresy, without any reference to the heretic? Let them attack the doctrine which they deem erroneous or heterodox. This is fair game—let them pursue it. But wherefore vilify and abuse, and say all manner of evil of him who holds it—and finally, whenever they have the power, fine, incarcerate, torture, and burn, acting as if they were the vicegerents of the God of wrath; and divinely commissioned to exterminate heretics and dissenters? The whole of Calvin's conduct justifies the belief that he felt as he acted, with deadly hostility to Servetus, whose name, as has been already observed, he seldom if ever mentions without some opprobrious epithet. Indeed, no man of his age, unless Beza be an exception, was such a thorough master of the vocabulary of abuse. Every man who had the misfortune to incur his enmity, or who would not succumb to his dictation, and flatter him as a prince among the Reformers, was sure to feel the weight of his scorpion lash. What was his treatment of Bolsec and of Castellio? Bolsec, a Carmelite monk, had embraced the reformed religion, a circumstance which should have recommended him to the favour of Calvin, and no doubt it would not only have done this, but gained his lasting friendship, provided Bolsec had never ventured to differ from him on any point of faith, but hailed him always as an infallible guide. Bolsec, however, having dissented from the pope of Rome, thought he had an equal right to dissent from the pope of Geneva—with whom he could not agree in the doctrine of Free-will and Predestination. He had the courage or the temerity to preach on these subjects before Calvin, and when he concluded, Calvin stood up in the congregation to expose what he supposed to be erroneous, or heretical, in the discourse. This was sufficiently mortifying to the preacher, who thought, perhaps, that his friend's anim-

adversions might have been reserved for another time and place. But this was nothing in comparison of what followed. After the dismissal of the congregation, Bolsee was arrested, sent to prison, and, by the advice of Calvin, banished for sedition and Pelagianism, and forbidden ever to appear again within the walls or territories of Geneva, under the penalty of being whipped.*

Bolsee being a man of spirit, was not thus to be crushed with impunity. He wrote a life of Calvin, and also of Beza; and repaid both in their own coin, with interest due.†

Castellio, a man, says Limborch, not inferior to Calvin in learning and piety, was another who had rueful experience of the temper and power of the Reformer, in consequence of differing from him about the doctrines of Predestination and Election, Free-will and Faith. Calvin, therefore, let loose upon him such torrents of abuse and invective as have seldom been equalled. “In some of his writings he calls him, *Blasphemer, Reviler, malicious barking dog, full of ignorance, bestiality, and impudence, imposter, a base corrupter of the sacred writings, a mocker of God, a contemner of all religion, an impudent fellow, a filthy dog, a knave, an impious, leud, crooked-minded vagabond, beggarly rogue.* At other times he calls him *a disciple and brother of Servetus, and an heretic.* Not contented with all this, he cruelly, maliciously, and most falsely assailed his moral character, and accused him of the commission of crimes. Castellio, by the enmity of Calvin, had been reduced to great poverty, and having on one occasion drawn out of a river a piece of drift-wood for fuel, which being no man’s property became the lawful possession of him who should first take it up, Calvin charged him with theft—a charge too palpably groundless to be sustained, but which nevertheless showed the diabolical mind of the accuser, who branded him with acquiring ‘*cursed gain at another’s expense and damage.*’”

* A. D. 1551. LIMBORCH’S *History of the Inquisition*, translated by S. Chandler. Lond. 1731, p. 64.

† Bolsee accused Calvin of making God the author of sin, and Beza calls Bolsee a villain, an impudent rogue, and a disguised wolf.

The charitable, kind-hearted, and honey-tongued Reformer, as if bent on the ruin of a man whom he grossly insulted and calumniated, “calls God to witness, that whilst he maintained Castellio in his house, *he never saw any one more proud, or perfidious, or void of humanity; and 'twas well known he was an imposter, of a peculiar impudence, and one that took pleasure in scoffing at piety, and that he delighted himself in laughing at the principles of religion.* These charges Castellio answers in such a manner as was enough to put even malice to silence.” Notwithstanding the character given him by Calvin, the truth of which God was invoked to witness, and which, if true, should have excluded Castellio from the society of all honest men, it received an absolute contradiction from Calvin himself! For he, with two of his friends in the ministry, pressed Castellio to take charge of a school at Strasburg, and gave him the strongest testimonials in behalf of his virtues and integrity, declaring that he was worthy to enter into the sacred ministry, and that his life had been pure and free from blemish—unstained *aliqua vitæ maculâ*. It was added that the only difference between him and the Reformer was about Solomon’s Songs, and the article of Christ’s descent into hell. Here was the true cause of Calvin’s hostility. He could not endure any contradiction. Because Castellio differed from him in opinion, “he endeavoured to render him every where impious, prohibited the reading of his books, and, what is the last effort of enmity, endeavoured to excite the civil magistrate against him to put him to death. But God was pleased to protect this good man from the rage of his enemies. He died at Basil in peace, and received an honourable burial, the just reward of his piety, learning, and merit.”

Servetus had not the same good fortune. He was pursued, from the commencement of the process, with determined hostility. Arnoullet, the printer, was summoned to attend his examination, but, being absent, his brother-in-law, Gueroult, corrector of the press, was ordered to appear, but from him no criminating information could be gathered. On the 18th of March, Arnoul-

let having returned, was examined—but he gave no evidence which could justify the imprisonment of Servetus. Soon after this the letters, which Trie had procured from Calvin, arrived, and on the 4th of April a grand meeting was held at the castle of Rousillon, and after mature consultation, it was concluded that M. de Villaneuva, physician, and B. Arnoullet should be taken into custody, and detained as prisoners, to answer on their sincerity to the charges that should be brought against them. Arnoullet was accordingly arrested. Servetus was at that time attending Maugiron in his own house, when the vice-bailiff called on him, and told him he was required in the palace of Dauphiny, where there were a great many wounded prisoners requiring medical and surgical aid. Servetus promptly obeyed the call, when the vice-bailiff, being joined by the grand-vicar, told the physician that he was their prisoner, and would have to answer certain informations against him. He was accordingly taken into custody by the jailer, who had orders to use him civilly according to his rank. They allowed him to retain his valet, Benedict Perrin, aged fifteen—a youth who had been five years in his service—and that day his friends were permitted to see him.*

M. D'Artigny has given an account of two examinations to which Servetus had to submit. The first of these took place on the 5th of April, 1553, before Ory, Inquisitor-General; Arbzellin, Doctor of Law, Vicar-General of Peter Palmier, Archbishop of Vienne; and Anthony de la Court, Lieutenant-General of the Bailiwick of Vienne. Having taken the usual oath, he answered to the interrogatories of the examiners, that his name was Michael de Villaneuve, Doctor of Physic, forty-two years old, a native of Tudelle, in the kingdom of Navarre;†

* *Chauffpie*, pp. 89—95.

† This answer has caused no small perplexity to the Biographers of Servetus as to the place of his birth, whether it was at Villa Neuva in Arragon, or Tudelle in Navarre. "We may probably," says D'Artigny, "remove this difficulty by supposing that Servetus's ancestors, originally from Villa Neuva, had come to settle at Tudella. And indeed we don't see any reason which could determine Servetus to disguise the name of his country before the judges of Vienne. This circumstance could be of no use on his trial: but it was not so with respect to his true name, Servetus: as it was his

at present, and for twelve years past or thereabout, a resident at Vienne. He then gave a brief recital of his history. Some printed papers were put into his hands, containing observations on the justification of infants and regenerating grace, with some handwriting on the margin containing observations which he was told were offensive, but to which he was allowed to give his own explanation. His judges thus manifested a desire to treat him with lenity. A long time having elapsed since the writing was made, he was at first doubtful whether or not it was his, but on close inspection he admitted it, saying that if it contained any thing against the faith of mother church he was ready to confess and correct his error.

On the 6th of April he was again interrogated, and asked "how he understood the proposition of a letter in a bundle marked (*Epistola xv. a*), where he explains a living faith and a dead faith? and because the said letter appeared to us, (the Inquisitors) sufficiently catholic, and contrary to the errors of Geneva, we made him read it; and after having read it, we asked him how he understood these words: *Mori autem sensim dicitur, in nobis fides, quando tolluntur vestimenta?* who answered, *Vestimenta fidei sunt opera charitatis et virtutis.*—i. e., Faith is said to die gradually when stript of its vestments.—The vestments of faith are deeds of charity and virtue.

Another letter on Free-will against those who are for the opposite doctrine being shown to him and read, giving way to his emotions and shedding tears, he told them that "about twenty-five years ago, there was printed in Germany a book of one called Servetus, a Spaniard, but of what place in Spain he was ignorant—that he read this book, being then but fifteen or seventeen years old, and it appeared to him that he wrote as well, or better than others—that he went to France to study medicine, and hearing of Calvin that he was a very

interest for several reasons, to conceal it, he always called himself in France, Michael of Villa Nuova."—*Yair*, p. 2. note.

The fact seems to be that, in his examination before the Inquisitors, he wished to be distinguished from that Servetus who had become notorious as a heretic, and to embarrass them by raising a doubt as to his identity with the Servetus of Villaneuva.

learned man, he wished to become acquainted with him, and wrote to him begging that any correspondence which should take place between them, should be in confidence, *sub sigillo secreti* (under the seal of secrecy) and as a brotherly correction, to see if he could make me change my opinion, or if I could make him change his, for I could not submit to his assertion. And in this way proposed to him certain questions of grave consideration, and he gave me an answer; and, seeing my questions were taken from what Servetus had written, he told me that I was that very Servetus; upon which I replied, that although I was not that person, yet, in disputing with him, I was willing to personate Servetus; for I was not much concerned for whom he took me, only let us debate upon our opinions, and upon these terms we exchanged letters till we were both piqued, and abused one another. Observing this, I gave him over, and for ten years, or thereby, I have not written to him, nor he to me, protesting before God and you, gentlemen, that I was never disposed to dogmatize or maintain any thing of that kind which might be found against the church or the Christian religion.”

After this, fourteen epistles were placed in his hands, which he admitted he had written to Calvin, by way of controversy, but without adhering to any doctrine expressed in them which should be disapproved by the church and his honourable judges.

Yair, from whose notes to *Chauffpie's Life of Servetus* this account is abridged, manifests much anxiety to find some flaw in the integrity of the Spaniard, and to convict him of disingenuousness for not giving a full and unreserved account of himself, by way, as it would seem, of a counterpoise to the villany of Calvin. “We see clearly,” says he, “that Servetus in many things endeavoured to delude his judges, which he did so artfully, that they could not condemn him to any rigorous punishment upon the papers they had in their hands. By distinguishing himself from Servetus, as a man unknown to him, whatever was found against Servetus could not be imputed to him; by saying that he had personated

Servetus only for the sake of disputing against Calvin, he weakened very much the proof these letters furnished, and they could at most only blame him for rashness and impudence in maintaining heretical propositions, and the excuse for that was the submission he testified for the Church. He does not appear at this time to be in a disposition to hazard his life for his sentiments, which will furnish us with a very strong proof that his stiffness upon this article at Geneva, arose from some other principle than attachment to his opinions."

And from what other principle shall we imagine his "stiffness" arose? What principle is stronger than the love of life, except it be such as is instilled by a love of truth and of fidelity to the cause of God? How far this principle prevailed with Servetus may appear in the sequel. The question now is how far was it incumbent on him, in existing circumstances, to make such a full and unreserved confession as would have sent him at once, without demur or inquiry, to the stake? By the laws of the British Constitution, a man is supposed to be innocent until he is proved guilty. Nay, so far are prisoners exempt from all obligation to confess, that they are sometimes admonished to plead not guilty, even when they are ready and willing to declare the contrary. There are few men who would not make the best defence they could, if in the same situation as Servetus, and avoid, by finesse or concealment of facts, such a confession as would sentence them to a cruel death, or even to a punishment much more gentle. We read of one Peter, who, on a trying occasion, lost his presence of mind, and "began to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man;"—though he did know him perfectly well. It is a dictate of sound wisdom and policy that accusers should bring proofs of the truth of their accusations, and that the accused should not be compelled to criminate themselves. "Why askest thou me? ask them who heard me;" said one who was much greater than Peter. It may be objected that as the prisoner, in the case before us, was not under the British Constitution, these observations are irrelevant. Admit this—what then?—

The laws of the British constitution are founded on principles of natural right, on reason and the word of God. The Inquisition was a tribunal erected in violation of all those principles, an execrable usurpation and tyranny which it was the duty of every Christian to abjure and endeavour to sweep away from the face of the earth. Servetus was under no obligation to confess to the Inquisitors. Theirs was a tribunal whose right he never acknowledged, and to which he was not responsible. He might have asked who made them "Lords over God's heritage"? Wherefore did they presume to interrogate him as to his religious opinions? His right to interrogate them was equally just. He was, however, a powerless victim. He had fallen into the hands of robbers and assassins—the priests of Moloch. He would be a choice victim at the altar of their idol. Had he confessed his heresies, or attempted to justify them, his doom would have been sealed at once, and he might be more blamed for want of prudence than extolled for hardihood. He was not authorized to commit suicide by condemning himself. Neither was he in the same position as some of the great Reformers who had advocated heresy from the pulpit—one whose business it was to stand up before all the world as the advocate of sacred truth, and if required, to die as a martyr in the cause. He had not this character to sustain, nor did he assume it.

This examination was followed up during the remainder of the month of April, by searching for further proof, and in copying the documents laid before them. Having been informed that there were three boys in the employment of Arnoullet the printer, the Grand-Vicar and Vice-Bailiff went to his house on the 2nd of May, and having excited the apprehension of these youths lest they should be treated as heretics, extorted them to confess that they had printed a large book in octavo, entitled *Christianismi Restitutio*, but that they knew nothing of its containing any heretical doctrine. They added that Michael Villaneuve had the book printed at his own expense, and that five bales of the work were sent on the 13th of January, to Peter Merrin, type-founder, at Lyons.

The Archbishop of Vienne and Cardinal de Tournon were immediately informed of this important discovery, and next day the Inquisitor and Grand-Vicar went to Lyons to interrogate Merrin. He admitted that he had received from Vienne, by a lighter, five bales addressed to him by M. de Villaneuve, M. D.—that he was desired by a clergyman of Vienne, James Charmin, to keep them till he should come and have them removed, and that he thought they contained nothing but clean paper. The Inquisitor caused the bales to be carried away, and put into one of the chambers of the Archbishop's palace. Charmin was interrogated, and condemned to three years' imprisonment—happy, perhaps, to escape thus lightly. During the month of May the Inquisitor made extracts of what he deemed the principal heresies, and, on the 17th of June, the prosecution was completed, and sentence pronounced.

Servetus, however, was now beyond their reach. It has been mentioned that when he was led into prison, the jailor had instructions to treat him according to his rank, and permit his friends to visit him. The reason for such unwonted indulgence is honourable both to Servetus and his prosecutors. It was because he had long successfully followed the practice of medicine in Vienne, and rendered important services to numbers, among whom was the Vicar-General, by curing them of various diseases. The high estimation in which his character was held, and a due sense of gratitude to their benevolent and beloved physician, led even the Inquisitors to treat him with such indulgence as afforded him an opportunity of escaping.* Of the mode in which he accomplished his escape, Chauffpie gives the following account:—

“After the second examination Servetus sent Perrin to the monastery of St. Peter, to ask the Grand-Prior if he had brought him the 300 crowns due to him from St.

* Quoniam diu jam Viennæ medicinam fecerat, variosque morbis affectos curaverat, multorum etiam ibi benevolentiam sibi comparaverat. In his ipse erat iudex hujus oppidi vicarius, qui, ut voluntatem suam in Servetum ostenderet, carceris custodem, liberaliter eum habere jussit, permisitque ut omnes qui vellent, libere eum adirent. Inconsueta vero ista comitas occasionem ipsi suppeditabat, tertio statim die ex carcere clam aufugiendi.
—*Allwoerd.* p. 54.

Andrews; and the Grand-Prior came and delivered to him the said sum. There was in the prison a garden with a platform which looked toward the court of justice in the palace; above this platform was a hogstie, whereby one could get down to the corner of the wall, and thence into the court. Although the garden was always kept shut, yet sometimes they allowed the freedom of it to prisoners above the common rank, either to walk, or for other reasons. Servetus having gone in there in the evening, examined every thing narrowly. On the 7th of April he got up at four o'clock in the morning, and asked the key from the jailor, who, going away to work amongst his vines, observing that he had a night-cap on his head, and was in his night-gown, did not suspect that he was dressed, and had his hat concealed under his night-gown, gave him the key, and went out a little afterwards with his workmen. When Servetus thought they were at a proper distance, he left his cap of black velvet and his furred night-gown at the foot of a tree, jumped from the terrace to the hogstie, and got into the court without hurting himself in the least, he got quickly to the gate of the bridge of the Rhone, which was not very far from the prison and got into the Lionese. They did not know of his escape till more than two hours thereafter. Very diligent searches were made to discover him; they wrote to the magistrates of Lyons and other cities where they presumed Servetus might have fled, and seized upon all his effects. It is believed that the Vice-Bailiff, being an intimate friend of Servetus, favoured his escape; but there is no proof of this, neither was the jailor an accomplice of his flight."

The escape of Servetus was not discovered till after a lapse of two hours. A search was immediately commenced which proved ineffectual. The bird had flown, but whither none could tell. The process against him however was continued—and at last closed with a sentence declaring him to be convicted of the crimes laid to his charge, condemning him to a pecuniary fine of 1000 livres tournois to the Dauphin King, to the confiscation of all his property, and immediately when apprehended

to be carried in a dung-cart to the place called Charnere, and there to be burned in a slow fire until his body be reduced to ashes. In the meantime he shall be executed in effigy, and his books burned.

The sentence was pronounced on the 17th of June,* and on the same day carried into effect. The effigy and five bales of books were placed on a dung-cart and conducted by the executioner to the appointed place. The effigy was fixed to a gibbet, and then burned by a slow fire before a crowd of spectators who were thus taught by a public executioner, by catchpoles, a dung-cart, a gibbet and the burning effigy of a physician whom they loved and honoured, how Christianity had improved, and how it was understood and practised by the Church which boasted that it was the sole repository of revealed truth—and how beautifully it could illustrate the doctrines of Salvation, and fulfil the declaration of him who said—*Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.*

* “The sentence of the ecclesiastical Judges was not pronounced till six months after that of the Vice-Bailiff, *i. e.* Saturday, the 23rd of December, 1553. It declared ‘Michael de Villeneuve a heretic, accused on account of heresy, composing and printing *Christianismi Restitutio*; his goods confiscated for the benefit of the courts of Vienne, deducting the expense of justice; ordaining besides that all the books of the said Villeneuve, which can be found, shall be burned.’”—*Wright*, p. 152.

CHAPTER V.

Servetus arrives in Geneva.—Recognised by the Brethren.—Calvin, how he should have acted.—Informs the Magistrates and has him imprisoned.—Employs La Fontaine to prosecute him for heresy.—Servetus examined.—Fontaine's scheme to entrap him.—Recommitted to prison and robbed of his property.—Examined again.—Accused of contradicting Moses and calling Trinitarians Tritheists.—His explanation of the term *Person*.—Petitions the Council.

SERVETUS might now felicitate himself on his good fortune. He had escaped from the lion's den—and left the cruel Inquisitors to enjoy their pastime. They might wreak their malice on his books and his effigy, but they could not obliterate the divine truths of Scripture from his heart. He carried with him the approving testimony of his own conscience—and he might expect to meet the kind sympathies of the wise and good: for there were still some beings left in whom all sentiments of humanity had not become extinct—some who had imbibed the spirit of Christian charity—and who, like the good Samaritan, would pour oil and wine into the plundered traveller's wounds, when the priest and the Levite passed him by. There are kind-hearted and benevolent men of all denominations—numbers who are much better than their creeds would make them—in whom the instincts of a benignant nature are more potent than the ingrafted principles of a false and barbarous theology.

It has been conjectured that the authorities of Vienne favoured the escape of Servetus—or that he was dismissed free, because he had avowed himself to be a strenuous opponent of the Lutherans. But though there should be no proof in this, it is by no means improbable that his escape may have been connived at, from feelings of friendship—and that the magistrates showed their own orthodoxy in a mode sufficiently satisfactory to the church by burning him, as has been noticed, in effigy.

Whither he directed his steps when he passed the bridge of the Rhone has not been discovered. Calvin in

a letter to Sulzer, says, that Servetus had been four months in Italy, and this may have been the common belief. De la Chapelle supposes he went strait to Geneva, and that he remained concealed there until he was arrested—but this conjecture is refuted by Servetus himself on his subsequent trial.

Happily men who are the objects of persecution often find sympathy and support even among enemies, from pure motives of humanity. For four months Servetus lay concealed, probably with friends who dared not openly to give him any countenance; when, venturing from his hiding place, he determined to go to Naples and practise among his countrymen, resident in that city. He went on horseback as far as Lysetum* or Le Luyset, and thence pursued his journey on foot to Geneva. He took lodgings there at the *Sign of the Rose*, and hoped, by keeping close, to avoid discovery. It has been alleged that he entered Geneva on a Sunday, with the intention of hearing Calvin preach, and that the latter having observed him caused him immediately to be apprehended and carried to prison. This however is not fact, for it appears by his own confession before the judges, that he entered Geneva secretly, and spoke to his hostess to find a boat which would convey him to the extremity of the Lake, that he might thence proceed to Zurich. As he had been well known to many persons in Germany and Geneva, of whom not a few were his enemies on account of his opinions, it was manifestly his interest to be concealed. But he could not elude the keen-scented sagacity and perseverance of his foe. Calvin discovered his retreat, and resolved to render his escape a second time impossible.

We learn, from Rilliet, that on the 13th of August, “*M. Servetus was recognised by some brethren.*”—The brethren, then, were the informers, and not improbably

* Preferring the way of Switzerland to that of Piedmont, “because he hoped, that in case he should be discovered, the Protestants would be more merciful to him than the Papists. But he was very much mistaken.”—*La Roche*.

Calvin himself was the first.* For Beza, as quoted by Bayle, tells us that he had a most retentive memory, and those whom he had once seen he could immediately recognise after a lapse of many years.† Now, how should Calvin have acted on this occasion? The “heart-probers” will answer—just as he did—burned him by a slow fire till his body was reduced to ashes—others of milder mood will say he should have left him alone to pass on his way unmolested. The christian who has imbibed the spirit of his master will say, he should have approached him with open arms and a smiling countenance, to congratulate him on his escape; he should have shown that he could forget and forgive all past differences between them, on subjects which neither of them understood, and could follow those precepts of brotherly kindness and charity of which no reader of the Gospels could be ignorant; he should have offered him a hospitable asylum, consoled him in his misfortunes, and assisted him to prosecute his journey to Naples or elsewhere. This would have been such conduct as becomes a christian, and above all a christian Reformer. We read of a rough hunter who earned his livelihood by his quiver and his bow, one who had sustained such grievous wrongs from a brother as provoked him to threaten his life. But his threats were only the first out-breathings of an injured, not of a revengeful spirit. His generous nature obtained the ascendancy it had for a moment lost. His fraternal heart refused to cherish the hostility of a foe. After a lapse of years, when he met his brother, all wrongs were forgotten, and though

* Certain it is, says Rillict, that they were members of the ministerial body who established his identity, and that his arrest took place on the Lord's day, 13th of August, 1553.

These holy men, it seems, thought it no impiety, or desecration, to pounce on their prey on the day of the Lord.

The Registers of the Company of Pastors in Geneva, state that “M. Servetus having been *recognised by some brethren*, it was found good to cause him to be imprisoned, to the end that he might not further infect the world with his blasphemies and heresies; for that he is known to be wholly incorrigible and desperate.”—“This seems pretty clearly to intimate that they were determined to destroy him. Calvin was the instigator.”

† *Memoriæ incredibilis, ut quos semel aspexisset, multos post annos statim agnosceret.*

he had not been brought up in the school of Christ, he acted just as the great Teacher would have taught him, and let the kind affections of his nature triumph over every feeling of resentment—and “when Esau met Jacob, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.”—*Gen.* xxxiii. 4. Had the Reformer conducted himself thus, to a man who had actually done him no wrong, he would have rendered real service to the Protestant cause, instead of inflicting upon it an indelible stigma. Such an example of christian kindness would have stood forth in beautiful contrast to the abominable atrocities of the Inquisitors; and rendered the name of Calvin as much the theme of eulogy as it is now of merited reprobation. Without compromising any principle or relaxing in his zeal against what he called heresy, he might have won by kindness the spirit that was not to be bent by argument, or subdued by fear. He might have heaped such “coals of fire on his head”—such glowing acts of philanthropy, as would have melted down the stubborn pride of the polemic.—Of an adversary he might have made a friend who would have honoured him as a genuine Reformer—instead of calling him *Simon Magus* and branding him with the infamy which must ever cling, like the shirt of the Centaur, to the name of a persecutor and a homicide.

Whatever feelings of animosity and revenge had been indulged in the heat and rage of their polemical warfare, they might now be permitted to subside. Surely enough had been done to gratify and appease those unchristian feelings—enough to humble and mortify “The Spanish dog,” as his reverence was pleased to call him. He had been thrust out of the practice of an honourable and lucrative profession;—driven from the society of friends with whom, in the intercourse of many years, had grown a mutual attachment—he was now completely excommunicated, obliged to live in concealment, a fugitive in constant apprehension of being taken and subjected to a cruel death. Was not all this a sufficient penalty for the boldness of contradicting the Reformer’s infallibility? Might not his escape be con-

sidered, by a pious mind, as an intimation from Providence that ample *satisfaction*, though not infinite, had been made to the offended dignity of the high priest of Geneva? Of Calvin no sacrifice was demanded to vindicate his character for orthodoxy; and should he not have been contented with hearing that his presumptuous adversary was burned in effigy, without requiring him to be burned in reality? No one would accuse him of want of zeal, as he had laboured earnestly to achieve all that was possible to gratify the Inquisitors, by furnishing a victim to their gibbet, unless he had presented himself, and he, indeed, would have been a still more acceptable offering, inasmuch as his heresies were more formidable than those of the lay Spaniard. The "religious public" of those days, as well as of our own, would laud the intention to burn as warmly as if the fire had been actually kindled, for as according to a heathen notion, he who meditates a crime incurs the same guilt as if he perpetrated it;* so he who wishes to roast a man for the glory of his God, has the same merit as if he actually roasted him. But the man of "consecrated intellect" was not satisfied by such a consideration as this, he desired that his purpose should be accomplished in earnest,—*conata peragere*—and his promise should be kept,—that if Servetus ever came to Geneva, he should not leave it alive. And though he must have read the Apostolic injunction, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head," (*Rom. xii. 20*), he may have thought himself exempt from obedience to the precept, by his readiness to arrive at its consequence, and that, too, not in the sense meant by the apostle, but in a literal sense worthy of Calvin, altogether original and his own.

* *Nam scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum
Facti crimen habet. Juv. Sat xiii.*

For, in the eye of heaven, a wicked deed
Devised, is done. *Gifford.*

Compare this with Matthew, chap. v. 28.

Vos Ethnici, scelera admissa punitis; apud nos (Christianos) et cogitare peccare est; vos conscios timetis, nos conscientiam.—*Min. Felix.*

No sooner did Calvin receive the gratifying intelligence that Servetus had arrived at Geneva, than he proceeded to carry his threats, against the life of the fugitive, into execution. He hastened to one of the Syndics, to request that, "In virtue of the power attached to his office, by the criminal edicts," he would cause Servetus to be apprehended and thrown into prison. With this request the Syndic immediately complied; and Calvin had the honesty to own that it was by his desire this was done. "I do not wish to deny," said he, "that it was on my suit that he was made prisoner."

By what authority, it may be asked, did the Syndics of Geneva seize on the person of a free-born man and throw him into prison? He was no subject of their state—he owed no allegiance to any of their authorities, lay or ecclesiastic. He had done them no wrong—he had violated no law—he had created no disturbance—he had not even expressed any obnoxious opinion within the walls of their city. He was merely passing on his way as a traveller to another country, and was anxious to depart from among them, without claiming even the common decencies of hospitality. He wished to remain unknown—but even this negative indulgence was refused—he was "recognised by some brethren"—he was a heretic, and the orthodoxy of Geneva required a victim.

Calvin, though ready to incur the guilt, may have wished to avoid the infamy, or the trouble, of personally carrying on a criminal prosecution. But by the laws of Geneva it was imperative on an accuser to go into confinement, as well as the person accused, till the result of the trial should be determined.* This part of the business was by no means agreeable to Calvin, he therefore employed one Nicholas de la Fontaine, his cook or valet, Rilliet says his private secretary, and Calvin, the best authority on this topic, his servant, (*son serviteur*) his slave of all-work, to come forward as the prosecutor. The writer in the *Christian Reformer*, for January,

* "In a case demanding corporeal punishment, if a party pursue, (i.e. prosecute) the said party pursuing must become a prisoner himself, and subject himself *ad penam talionis*," &c., *ordonnances of 1529. No. 8.*

1847, justly observes; "Had not serious and fatal results been involved in the proceedings, there would have been something truly ridiculous in the appearance of such a creature standing up in a court of justice against a man of the splendid talents and vast erudition of Servetus, charging him with being 'The sower of great heresies,' and solemnly declaring that he raised the criminal action in *his own proper* and *private name*, and demanding that the prisoner should reply to a long series of questions relating to abstruse theological and metaphysical speculations, to which one of the first scholars of the age had devoted his studies for at least twenty years."

Servetus having been seized and incarcerated, as has been stated, was brought before a merciless tribunal, and subjected to a minute and rigorous examination, during several successive days. It seems strange that he did not absolutely refuse to submit to their authority, and solemnly protest against the right of any magistrate or ecclesiastic of Geneva to call him to their bar, to be tried as if he had been one of their subjects and a transgressor of their laws. Such a protest indeed would have availed nothing, and, perhaps, he thought it would be more for the interests of christian truth, to face his accuser and answer his interrogatories.

The first examination took place before the Lord Lieutenant, Pierre Tissot, on the 14th of August, when his accuser demanded that, Servetus, a sower of great heresies, should answer concerning his writings and opinions, to a long catalogue of thirty-eight or forty articles,* drawn up and furnished by Calvin. In these it was stated, that about twenty-four years ago, Servetus began to trouble the churches of Germany by his heresies—that he had been forced to flee to escape punishment—that he printed an execrable book which infected many people—that he privately printed another book containing infinite blasphemies—and further disseminated his poison by annotations on the Bible and on

* *Quadraginta memorat CALVINUS in Epp. et Respons. Ep. clii. 289. Alwoerden, p. 64, note.*

Ptolemy's Geography—and that, being a prisoner in Vienne, he escaped. He was now required to answer various interrogatories concerning the divine essence—charged with having called the Trinity a demon with three heads like the Cerberus of the poets—with having uttered injurious reproaches and blasphemies against the saints, especially against Augustine, Chrysostom, and Athanasius—that he named Melancthon a son of the devil, Belial, and Satan—held heretical notions concerning Christ, and called Trinitarians atheists.

In his reply to all these charges, Servetus acted with patience and candour. He admitted that he had written some annotations on the Bible and on Ptolemy—but that they were not of an injurious but beneficial tendency—that he was not conscious of having infected any persons with poisonous notions—if his accuser would prove to him the blasphemies with which he was charged, he was ready to retract them—that he had been imprisoned and made his escape, lest he should be burned—and that the *prison was kept as unguardedly as if the priests had wished him to save himself.*

Rilliet observes that in this last answer, Servetus retorts by an indirect attack upon Calvin, to whom, and to Trie, he imputes his imprisonment at Vienne. We learn, also, from the same authority that the prosecutor Nicholas, acted with diabolical subtlety in desiring that the answers of Servetus should be restricted to a solitary affirmation or negation—thus preventing him from making any attempt to justify, or explain his meaning—an indulgence or a right which it would have been iniquitous to refuse.—But, as it seems, they were apprehensive lest his answers might expose the conduct of Calvin to censure, produce a favourable impression on the Council, and extricate him from the snares in which they had him entangled. Rilliet states the matter thus. “After the first five questions put by Fontaine, the indictment contained others regarding the doctrine of Servetus, accompanied with the following observation:—And inasmuch as he may equivocate, pretending that his blasphemies and heresies are only sound doctrines, the said

Nicolas proposes certain articles, upon which he requires the said heretic to be examined.

“The said Nicolas desires that the said Servetus should be constrained to reply as to the *fact* of the articles now lodged, without entering into dispute regarding the truth or falsehood of the doctrine; for that will be made plain hereafter.

“The pursuing party thus wished to establish the point of fact, and to shut up his opponent within the strict limits of an affirmative or a negative reply. The articles, to the number of thirty-one, referred, in fact, to the principal assertions of Servetus reckoned heretical by the Genevese Reformer, and which were all cited, not according to the book printed at Vienne; but *according to the work in M.S. sent to Calvin by Servetus, some years before.*”

Here was a management “Full of all subtlety and all mischief,” and worthy only of such a “child of the devil” as Elymas the sorcerer.

The questions were all founded on topics on which Servetus had already expressed his opinion, in the work which he had sent to Calvin, and from which indeed they were extracted. The insidious proposer of them wanted only a simple *yea* or *nay* to each question, for in either case Servetus would be entrapped, and pronounced guilty of heresy. If he said *yea*, it would be confession, and what need of further witness? If *nay*, there was the work ready to contradict him. To most, if not to all of the questions, the answer might be *yea* or *nay*, in such a qualified sense as to disappoint the accuser of the expected condemnatory reply. One part of a question might demand an answer in the affirmative, and the other in the negative. Each, of many of the interrogatories proposed, embraced several propositions, some of a most insulting nature, on which it would have been well if both the propounder of them, and, Calvin, their fabricator had been examined. A man of much less discernment than Servetus, must have instantly seen through the villany of their tactics, and even the judges must have felt ashamed to give their sanction to

such an iniquitous proceeding, for as Rilliet states, "The endeavour of De la Fontaine, to limit Servetus strictly to affirmation or negation, was not crowned with success."

The Inquisitors at Vienne, acted with much more lenity and justice, for they allowed Servetus to explain, in his own sense, the passages to which they objected.

The most formidable article was reserved for the last, that it might make and leave a stronger impression. It accused him of having, in his published works, inveighed bitterly against a minister of the word of God, in the church of Geneva, even against Monsieur Calvin, and his doctrine, which he denounced by every injurious epithet which it was possible to invent.

To this part of the charge Servetus replied, that he had been deeply injured by the abuse of Calvin—that he had retorted—criticised and marked with his censure many errors in the doctrines of that Reformer.

That he wrote in his own vindication, not with any intent to abuse him, but to demonstrate his errors and mistakes, which he engages to do in a full congregation, by solid arguments and the Holy Scriptures.

Such declarations must have been, to the last degree, mortifying to Calvin, and to his principal accusers. They show the confidence of the martyr in the rectitude of his opinions, and his courageous promptitude to defend them, but they tended only to prejudice his cause and exasperate his persecutors.

In the course of the examination, his accuser produced against him a M.S. and a printed book, *Christianismi Restitutio*, of which he owned himself to be the author; and as to the M.S. he had sent it about six years before to Calvin, to have his judgment upon it. To produce against him a document which had been transmitted to Calvin in confidence, was a base and ungenerous act, and yet it was but a small item in the long account of his trial and persecution. In the whole of the proceedings no citation was made from his books on the Trinity, printed at Haugenau in 1531 and 1532, because, it seems, the prosecutors were unable to procure them.

After his examination, Servetus and Fontaine, were

sent as criminals to John Grasset, the keeper of the prison, there to be detained under penalty of death. On entering the prison Servetus delivered to Grasset "97 crowns, a chain of gold, weighing twenty crowns, and six gold rings. This silver and these trinkets, which consisted of a large turquoise, a white sapphire, a diamond, a ruby, a large emerald of Peru, and a signet ring of coralline were afterwards deposited in the hands of Pierre Tissot who rendered an exact account of them [to whom?] when the process was concluded."—*Rilliet*, pp. 102, 103.

These trinkets were prized by their owner, in all probability, far beyond their intrinsic value, as pledges of friendship and affection, or as family memorials and hereditary property. His money, had he been allowed to retain it, might have procured him some comforts to mitigate the severity of his confinement. But being a heretic and an adversary of Calvin, wherefore should he not be pillaged of his little all and refused the common rights of humanity?

On the day following the first examination of Servetus, viz. the 15th of August, the Lord Lieutenant, having communicated the result to the Syndics, desired that the accused might be put upon his trial, and the pursuer authorised to persevere in the suit. Fontaine also presented a petition stating that he had been "constituted a prisoner in a criminal prosecution against Servetus for the grave scandals and troubles which the said Servetus had occasioned in Christendom for the space of twenty-four years; for the blasphemies which he has spoken and written against God; for the heresies with which he infested the world; for the wicked calumnies and false defamations which he has published against the true servants of God, and especially against *Mr. Calvin*, whose honour the said Proposant is bound to maintain as that of his pastor, if he would be reckoned a Christian; and also on account of the blame and the dishonour which might accrue to the church of Geneva, seeing that the said Servetus specially condemns the doctrine which is preached there."

As the crafty scheme to entrap Servetus by confining him in answering the charges against him, to a simple affirmative or negative, had not been “crowned with success”—the petition was repeated that he might be compelled to reply formally *Yes* or *No* without digressions, that he may no more *mock God and your Lordships*, and also that the said *Proposant* be not frustrated of his right.”

The impious and audacious insolence of such a petition has been seldom equalled. It was worthy of its wretched fabricators—and had the Syndies been influenced by any pure desire to guard the sacred name from mockery and insult they would have given the petitioner and his petition a very different reception from that which it received.

Proposant further supplicated that, if Servetus should be found guilty of the heresies contained in the Interrogatories, he should be prosecuted by the Procurator Fiscal, and the *Proposant* dismissed free “from all expense, injury, and risk; not because he shuns or refuses to prosecute *such a quarrel*, which all christians and children of God ought to maintain even unto death, but because he understands that the usages and customs of your city warrant that, and because it belongs not to him to undertake the duty and office of another.”—*Rilliet*, pp. 104, 105.

Thus does “The *Honourable* [for so he is styled in the minutes of the court] Nicolas de la Fontaine, of St. Gervais au Vixen, a Frenchman,” undertake what he calls a *quarrel*—

Si rixa est, ubi tu pulsas, ego vapulo tantum.

Juv. Sat. III.

If that be deemed a quarrel, which heaven knows,
He only gives, and I receive the blows.—*Gifford*.

and modestly intimates that he is a christian, a child of God, as he is ready to prove by his zeal in leading to the stake a harmless fugitive from the fires of the Inquisition! verily, if he acted not by compulsion under the rod of his master Calvin, he gave convincing proof that he had drunk deeply of his intolerant and sanguinary spirit.

Instead of sending the Petitioner back to his master with a stern rebuke for his insolence and bigotry, the Council responded to his wishes, and that no time might be lost, "their Lordships proceeded to the hall of the ancient Episcopal Palace, where they held their criminal courts, and there summoned Servetus and Fontaine before them."

The Honourable Nicolas being asked if he wished to persevere in the prosecution, replied that he did. Servetus having taken the usual oath to speak the truth under the penalty of sixty *sous*, the Court proceeded to an examination which differed little in substance or character from that which he had already undergone. He accused Calvin more strongly than before, of having caused the prosecution at Vienne, and affirmed that it was not to him he was indebted for not being burned alive.—On the subject of infant baptism, to which he was opposed, he expressed himself strongly.—If he had erred in any points, he was ready to correct himself.—“As to his attacks on the church of Geneva, in the person of Calvin, he replied as at first, adding, that what he had formerly written against Calvin in his own defence had not been with the intention of injuring, but to show him his errors and his faults, which he undertook to demonstrate in full congregation, by divers reasons, and authorities of the Holy Scriptures.”—This was a brave challenge, which showed that he had no small confidence in his own powers, and in his knowledge of Holy Writ—a challenge which a redoubtable champion of the Reformation, though he was no great orator, could not creditably refuse to accept; especially as in the course of the process, it was repeated, accompanied with a complaint that it was not decent nor becoming to treat before an earthly tribunal, and even in prison, of the affairs of Christianity. Calvin showed no disinclination to enter the polemic arena, but, on the contrary, protested that “there was nothing that he more desired than to plead such a cause in the temple before all the people.”

Rilliet observes upon this topic that “The Council.

feared, no doubt, that it would thus dispossess itself of the cognizance of an affair which stood connected with the prerogatives of which it had recently appeared so jealous. On the other hand, the friends of Servetus among the magistrates might fear to see their protégé defeated by Calvin, whose word was much more powerful, and thus have their own hands fettered in the final judgment by the result of the public discussion. The spirit of domination, and that of prudence, thus induced the Council to deny the conference which Servetus desired."

Another reason may be discovered, without the gift of much penetration, for the magistrates declining to sanction the proposed discussion. The friends of Calvin might have dreaded the result to their champion, not less than the friends of Servetus to theirs. But who were the friends of Servetus? Who had come manfully forward to throw the shield of his protection before the persecuted stranger? What defender of the wronged had dared to lift up his voice to protest against the whole proceeding as unparalleled in cruelty and injustice? The very day of his arrival in Geneva he was "recognized by the brethren" and fastened on as a sheep by a horde of wolves. He was instantly dragged before a tribunal to which he was in no way responsible—and witnessed against by the very M.S. which, in the unsuspecting confidence of his heart, he had sent to the man who was thirsting for his blood; and of whom he could not have deemed it possible that he would so act the part of a traitor as to wound and destroy him by shafts selected from his own quiver. We cannot sufficiently admire the courage of Servetus, worthy of an apostle of the truth of God, who thus, unfriended and alone, in a strange city, surrounded by enemies, yet dared to throw down the gauntlet of defiance to the formidable and ferocious Calvin. At the same time he expressed a becoming respect for the sacred subjects that should be discussed by desiring to change the stage from a criminal court to a temple of religion as more appropriate to the high arguments that should be brought under consideration.

The answers of Servetus to the various interrogatories

not proving satisfactory—as might have been anticipated—it was resolved that the prosecution should be carried on; and that Nicolas de la Fontaine, on giving bail to appear again when called for, should be dismissed. Accordingly the Honourable Nicolas introduced another Honourable as his surety—the Hon. Anthony Calvin, a citizen of Geneva, a brother of the Reformer.

On the following day, August 16th, the court met. Among the assessors, this day, appeared two new characters, Philibert Berthelier and M. Germain Colladon, the representatives, according to Rilliet, of two adverse political parties in Geneva, the former chief leader of *young Geneva*, *princeps juventutis*, of the liberal party opposed to the austere novelties of Calvin. The latter, a man after Calvin's own heart, a French refugee, accustomed to practise at the bar, well qualified as Fontaine's advocate, to cope with Servetus, unquestionably selected for that task by the Reformer himself. Berthelier owed the Reformer a grudge, because he had excluded him from the Lord's supper, and he was at this juncture under sentence of excommunication passed by the Consistory, which Calvin did not wish to remove. He was, therefore, disposed to take the part of Servetus, rather from a feeling of resentment against his persecutor, than from a sense of justice. The Hon. Nicolas and Colladon came ready prepared with their proofs, and produced certain passages from Melancthon and Œcolampadius, with various extracts from the prisoner's annotations on the Bible and his *Restitutio*, and the examination was resumed upon the articles which had been already considered. Servetus having replied equivocally as to the sense in which he understood the term *person* in the Trinity, Colladon offered to prove from his writings that his meaning was different from his expressions. Being interrupted by Berthelier, who spoke in defence of Servetus and his opinions, a controversy arose between the two advocates, and in a short time the meeting broke up and was adjourned by the court till the following day.

The examination was far from satisfactory to Calvin.

He was disappointed by the result, and felt it to be necessary, if he would bring the business to a proper conclusion, that he should no longer remain behind the scene, but come boldly on the stage *in propria persona* and manage the prosecution. "Ceasing then," says Rilliet, "to conceal himself behind La Fontaine and Colladon, he became, for the first time, openly the accuser of the prisoner, and drew attention to many errors written by the said Servetus, as his books showed; declaring 'that he did not wish to excuse himself for having permitted *his servant (son serviteur,)* the Hon. Nicolas, to become a party against the said Servetus, and that he was now willing to pursue, as one prepared to be himself the prosecutor.' He added, regarding Berthelier, 'that he understood by the process that Berthelier had interfered to plead in excuse and defence of those things which the said Servetus had consented to name as established by his book.'"

In consequence of this remonstrance, Calvin was uthorised to assist, "in order that his errors (the prisoner's) might be better demonstrated, and to have whomsoever he chose with him at the examination."

On the 17th the trial was resumed, and conducted more in detail and before a greater number of spectators than usual, attracted probably by the expectation of seeing Servetus and Calvin confronted. On this occasion two letters of Ecolampadius' were produced, and two of the *Loci* of Melancthon to prove that Servetus had been already condemned in Germany. This he denied—for though those two authors condemned him, their sentence was not to be taken for that of the magistrate. In the third article, relating to Ptolemy, it was averred that he had contradicted the account which Moses gives of Palestine, that it is a land flowing with milk and honey, and said, on the contrary, that it was miserably sterile. Against this malevolent charge, founded in ignorance and bibliolatry, Servetus defended himself by saying, that he had not written against Moses, but a certain writer of modern date, and that no harm was either done or intended against Moses. Suppose he had

stated, without reference to any particular author, that the aspect of Judea and its fertility were very different now from what they were in the days of Moses and the Patriarchs, what would he have said that has not been said repeatedly by the most orthodox writers? * Could not Calvin and his abettors have found in such statements a fulfilment of ancient prophecies and of curses denounced on the land for the transgressions of the people?

Calvin did not, of course, accede to the justice of his antagonist's explanation, but contended that "it necessarily inculpated Moses, and was a great outrage against the Holy Spirit! but Servetus would not acquiesce." "So far," says Calvin, "was that vile dog from being abashed by such pertinent arguments, that he only twitched his muzzle, saying: 'Let us pass to something else—there is nothing wrong there.'"[†]—*Rilliet*, p. 116.

Certain notes which he had published in the Bible were next adduced against him, and especially some on the 7th and 8th verses of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. In these he was accused of having perversely sought a literal sense, and affirmed that the prophet spake of Cyrus, but that Christ should be understood as meant mystically.[‡] This exposition Calvin called impious and malignant—and a diabolical impiety—a censure which gave Servetus no disturbance, though it may have excited his contempt.

He was then accused of affirming that the Trinity was a dream of Augustine—of having used many injurious expressions on the subject, and called Trinitarians not only Tritheists, but Atheists. In reply, Servetus

* Those who wish for information on this topic may read "Maundrell's Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, A. D. 1697."—He, and numberless travellers since his time, describe the country as bearing an aspect totally different from what it wore in the days of Moses.

† *Obscenus canis tantum os perfricuit et dixit uno verbo nihil esse hinc mali.* The translation is Tweedie's.

‡ Servetus was by no means singular in holding this opinion. La Roche says—"Grotius who applied that chapter to Jeremiah, in a literal sense, was no less mistaken than Servetus: I cannot tell whether any body did ever call the explication of that learned man *an impious thing*." Calvin had no hesitation to make the most unfounded assertions. He not only charges Servetus with quoting authors whom he never read, but of not being able to read Greek. The candid La Roche says—"I cannot tell whether the first accusation be well grounded; but I am sure the second is not true."

denied that he had called Trinitarians Tritheists, for that he himself believed in a Trinity, but those only who affirmed that there is a real distinction of persons, for that would take away the unity of the essence. He affirmed that he followed the opinions of the Fathers of the Church, Ignatius, Polycarp, and others—and that by the term *person* or *hypostasis* he understood a visible and apparent subsistence, but not three equal and distinct subsistences in the same being.*

After these explanations, his accusers produced some passages from the *Restitutio*, with others from letters to Abel Pepinus, and a copy of Calvin's Institution which he had illustrated with M. S. notes, accusing the author of erroneous and heretical doctrines. He also affirmed that a thousand copies of his *Restitutio* had been printed—his printer had sent many copies of it to Frankfort, and that Calvin had written to the minister of that place to have them destroyed as diligently as possible.

In a fruitless endeavour to lessen the odium which must ever be associated with the name of Calvin, Rilliet endeavours to make it appear that it was not as the opponent of the Reformer, and scarcely as a heretic that Servetus was prosecuted. The articles drawn up against him by the Attorney-General, he affirms "were prepared on the avowed conviction that Servetus had always been a fiery and dangerous spirit, whose constant endeavours had tended to the entire disorganizing of Christendom. This is what they hoped to deduce from the answers which the public minister wished to draw from the accused."

* Melancthon expresses himself very indignantly against Servetus for his adherence to the classical meaning of the term *Persona*. "Lusit homo fanaticus, Servetus, de vocabulo *Persona*, et disputat olim Latinis significasse *Habitum* aut *Officiū Distinctionem*, ut diseimus Roscium alias sustinere *Personam Achillis*, alias sustinere *Personam Ulyssis*, seu alia est *Persona Consulis*, alia *Servi*, ut Cicero inquit, *Magnum est in Republica tueri Personam Principis*. Et hanc veterem significationem vocabuli sycphantice detorqueat ad Articulum de tribus Personis Divinitatis."

Quare sycphantice, clementissime et Græcorum linguæ doctissime Domine Melancthon?—Nonne tu ipse semel et iterum significationes veras Evangelii vocabulorum detorsisti? Quâ regulâ interpretationis demonstrare potuisti Deum unum Vet. et Novi Testamenti, non unum Deum sed tres Deos significare:—viz. Deum Patrem, Deum Filium, et Deum Sanctum Spiritum? Tu quoque, ut omnes Papistæ exclamant, merito inter hæreticos recenseri dignus es—imo inter hæresiarchos.

“But Servetus did not allow himself to be surprised, and replied to the questions designed to convict him, with much ingenuity, ability, and apparent frankness. In our day, one would have said that he conducted the affair like a man of talent.”

This is well and honestly said. No doubt it required some talent in one who was a total stranger, cruelly and wickedly kidnapped as he had been, to answer the interrogatories by which his enemies tried to perplex and confound him. How would the chief persecutor have answered had he been arrested and carried before the Inquisition, and made to answer all the questions which they might have proposed to him in regard of his “Institution,” which the Parliament of Paris condemned as containing “*damnable, pernicious, and heretical doctrine?*”

As to Servetus being a fiery and dangerous spirit endeavouring to disorganize Christendom, it is scarcely possible to forge a more palpable falsehood. Very likely, indeed, that a physician resident in Vienne, in the Archbishop's palace, and quietly pursuing his professional duties under the ever watchful eye of the Inquisition, should make any attempt to disorganize Christendom! Had such a charge been brought against his persecutor, it would have had some show of plausibility;—against Servetus it was manifestly wicked and absurd. The whole of his endeavours to disorganize Christendom lay in his impugning the infallibility of Calvin.

Rilliet, in his report of the trial, which was, in fact, “a mockery, a delusion, and a snare,” bears repeated testimony to the skill and address of Servetus in exposing the misrepresentations, and refuting the statements of the prosecutors. They tried again to make him compress his answers into a simple affirmation or negation but as before it failed of success.

The trial, which had been suspended, was resumed on Monday, the 21st of August. During the interval the indefatigable hostility of Calvin was not idle. While his victim was languishing in confinement, Calvin was exerting all his influence to accomplish his murderous threats.

Rilliet informs us that “*he dealt urgently with the judges to confirm them in the design of establishing the culpability of Servetus*—and depicted him less as his theological adversary than as an enemy to the Christian faith, already tried on that single account by the Romanists themselves. Would the Council show itself to be more indifferent than the Romanists were, in defending *the honour of God?*”

How many crimes of the deepest die are perpetrated by holy villains to defend what they hypocritically call the honour of God—but in reality to gratify the worst passions that rule the human breast?

“The right to prosecute had now devolved on the Attorney-General, Claude Pigot, in consequence of the pursuing party being freed, and in compliance with the criminal edicts. He was not prepared, however, to present the new indictment; and the first part of the meeting was employed in examining Servetus on the subject of a letter from Balthazar Arnoullet, dated on the 14th of July.”—In that letter he endeavoured to exculpate himself for having printed *Christianismi Restitutio*—stating that he had been deceived by Gueroult, the corrector of his press, and desiring Bertet, to whom the letter was addressed, to have all the copies of the work destroyed.

After this Calvin came into Court accompanied by some of his clerical friends, and entered into a discussion with Servetus concerning the sense of the Fathers on the question of the Trinity, which he contended differed widely from that of his antagonist. A long controversy ensued about the meaning of the terms *person* and *hypostasis*, to the great edification, no doubt, of the learned Syndics! Servetus having referred to several of the Fathers whose works were not at hand, the judges ordered them to be procured at the prisoner’s expense; and that he should be supplied with paper and ink that he might have the means of writing a supplicatory letter to the Court. Rilliet says, that the jailor was instructed to give him a single sheet of paper, and to keep him “very close,” to prevent all communication with those outside of the prison. Calvin,

who was present at the meeting, was certainly not a stranger to these precautionary measures."

Being supplied with materials for writing, he addressed a petition to "The Hon. Lords and Gentlemen the Syndics and Council of Geneva," stating that it was contrary to all laws of justice human and divine, to accuse a man of a capital offence on account of any dogmas of faith—that he was unjustly detained as a prisoner, and had disseminated none of his opinions in the state—finally, he requests that he may have an advocate to plead his cause.—But let us hear himself:—

"Michael Servetus humbly showeth, that the prosecution of a man, for the doctrine of the Scripture, or for any question arising from it, is a new invention, unknown to the Apostles and their Disciples and to the ancient Church. As it appears first, from the Acts of the Apostles, chapters 18 and 19, where such accusers are cast off, and referred to the Churches, when there is no crime in the case, and it is only a matter relating to religion. Likewise, in the time of the Emperor *Constantine*, when there were great heresies and criminal accusations both on the part of Athanasius and Arius, the said Emperor with the advice of his Council and all the Churches, decreed, That according to the ancient doctrine, such accusations should not be admitted, even though a man were a heretic as Arius was; that all their disputes should be determined by the Churches, and that a man convicted, or condemned by them should be banished unless he repented. That punishment was at all times inflicted upon heretics in the ancient Church, as may be proved by a thousand other passages and authorities. Wherefore, my Lords, the said petitioner begs that he may no longer be prosecuted as a criminal, agreeably to the doctrine of the Apostles and their Disciples and of the ancient Church, who never admitted any such accusation.

"Secondly,—My Lords, the Petitioner beseeches you to consider that he has committed no fault in your city nor any where else; that he has not been a seditious man, nor a disturber of the public peace; (for the matters treated of by him are difficult, and such as can be understood only by learned men) that all the time he was in Germany, he never discoursed of these things but with *Ecolampadius*, *Bucer*, and *Capito*, and that he never imparted his opinions to any body in France; besides, he always disapproved, and continues to disapprove, of the Anabaptists who oppose the magistrates, and would have all things to be in common.—Wherefore he concludes, that he ought not to be prosecuted as a criminal for setting forth some questions debated by the doctors of the ancient Church, since he hath done it without acting like a seditious man.

“Thirdly,—My Lords, because he is a foreigner, wholly unacquainted with the customs of this country, and knows not how to speak and proceed in his trial, he humbly beseeches you to give him an Attorney, or Advocate who may speak for him, it will be well done, and the Lord will prosper your Republic.

“MICHAEL SERVETUS, OF VILLANEUVA,
“Pleading in his own Cause.””

A letter like this should have made no slight impression on minds not hardened by bigotry and closed against every sentiment of justice and mercy. On the minds of his judges it produced no change: Its author had offended Calvin—their idol and their tyrant. Death alone could expiate the offence.

NOTE—Of the Philibert Berthelier, mentioned in page 79, there is a brief account in Bayle’s Dictionary, from which we learn that he was Registrar of the Inferior Court of Justice: that he acquired notoriety only by his misdeeds, and gave occasion to be quoted as a man of note, by a horrible calumny against Calvin. In the year 1552, being excommunicated by the Consistory, he complained to the senate, and had the sentence removed. Calvin, however, his “inexorable enemy,” as Bayle styles him, would not consent to his absolution; but, preaching against contempt of the sacrament, he raised his voice, and lifting up his hands, said, he would imitate St. Chrysostom, and rather suffer himself to be massacred, than present the holy mysteries to those who had been judged unworthy of them. In consequence of this threat, it was judged prudent, that Berthelier should not appear at the communion. By Calvin’s manœuvres, “the Consistory obtained a complete victory, and in a manner made the Senate and Council of Two Hundred buckle to. What would they not have done in a democratic country? Is it possible to rule over men who tell the people that they had rather suffer themselves to be killed than to consent that holy things should be profaned? St. Chrysostom’s example, alleged very much to the purpose, is a cunning way of threatening the government with an insurrection.”—*Bayle’s Dictionary*, London, MDCCX., vol. 1, p. 602.

CHAPTER VI.

Calvin preaches against Servetus.—Calumnious charges of the Attorney-General.—Confuted by Servetus.—Prudent in divulging his opinions.—His veracity impugned and defended.—Resolves to adhere to his principles.—Attempt to defame his moral character.—Reasons for refusing to grant him an advocate.—Anecdotes of Calvin's treachery and cruelty.—Makes extracts unfairly from the works of Servetus, who replies, and animadvertes on his accuser.—Affirms that he is answered not by Scripture, but by noise and abuse.

AT this stage of the process, public attention had been drawn to the subject, and some sympathy excited for the prisoner, mingled with a few murmurs against the justice of the proceeding altogether. One of the Council had even dared to discuss some theological questions in favour of Servetus. Calvin's popularity might be shaken on account of his asperity against him, unless some successful attempt were made to produce an opposite feeling, and to represent his moral character in such an aspect as would deprive him of the compassion, not only of "the religious public," but of all virtuous men. It seems to have been a concerted plan between the Attorney-General and Calvin to accomplish this object by a simultaneous onslaught, and while the former made a furious attack on the morals of Servetus in the Court of Law, Calvin should do the same from the pulpit before a crowded congregation. Accordingly, on the Sabbath following, while the trial was pending, this man of "consecrated intellect" thought it no impiety, but a meritorious act, to desecrate his pulpit and the house of God, by a direct personal attack on the man whom he had cast into prison because he was a better theologian than himself, and would not subscribe slave to the blasphemous doctrines of the "Institution." He accused him of all manner of iniquity, political, religious, moral—"carefully bringing out," as Rilliet states, "his impieties and blasphemies, scattering all the excuses with which

men tried to conceal his crimes, and condemning the compassion with which they were pleased to regard him.”—p. 140.

Calvin's friend and ally, the Attorney-General, was, in all probability, one of his auditors, and being furnished with a new stock of ammunition, and much stimulated by the exhortations of his leader, when the Court met on the following day, Monday, August 28th, he commenced a furious attack on the enemy. His speech in virulence and falsehood might serve as a counter-part to the previous discourse of his pastor.—He endeavoured to confute the arguments contained in the petition of Servetus, and affirmed that the examples taken from the Acts of the Apostles were erroneous; that the first Christian Emperors claimed and exercised their right to try and inflict capital punishment on heretics; that Servetus having studied law at Toulouse should have known this; that he wished to deprive magistrates of that right because his conscience condemned him and proved him worthy of death; and to escape from that, he wished to establish a false doctrine, denying that capital punishment should be inflicted on the guilty. He proceeded to accuse him of favouring the Anabaptists who rebel against magistrates;—of falsehood, in declaring that he did not disseminate his tenets; of inconsistency and contradiction in his replies, one while saying that he is willing to be corrected, in another audaciously maintaining that he has never spoken or acted amiss.—The most grievous charge of all was one in which the accuser must have been well schooled by Calvin, viz. that the accused had caluminated some teachers of the word of God by charging them with blasphemy and heresy, which was itself a capital offence. The Attorney-General speaks throughout as if the Defendant were already found guilty, and rejects the application made for an advocate to undertake his defence.

In reply to a charge so full of virulence and misrepresentation, Servetus showed great firmness and presence of mind; and, though alone, proved himself in argument able for all his adversaries. In his petition he had

judiciously referred to the 18th and 19th chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, to show that in the primitive days of Christianity, questions or disputes concerning religious doctrines were not discussed nor decided by the civil authorities. When the Jews brought Paul to the judgment seat of Gallio, saying, “ ‘This man persuadeth people to worship contrary to the Law,’ and when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of injustice, or of wicked mischief, ye Jews, I might reasonably bear with you; but if it be a question of doctrine, and of names, and of your law, look ye yourselves to it: for I will not be a judge of such matters.’ And he drove them from the judgment seat.” Thus, also, when the followers of Demetrius dragged the companions of Paul into the theatre, with the intention of wreaking summary vengeance on them, the town clerk dissuaded them from their purpose, by stating that those men whom they had brought thither, were not guilty of any offence cognizable by the civil law.

In acting thus, the heathen authorities proved how well they knew the just boundary of their jurisdiction, and that they had no right to interfere in questions between two parties about “words and names,” though of less portentous sound than trinities, and incarnations and hypostases. To the Christian authorities of Geneva these examples were proposed in vain—the Attorney-General deemed them inapplicable. They assumed, forsooth, that they had a right to decide in questions between a man and his God; and contrary, not only to heathen practice, but in violation of Apostolic precept and example, to employ the sword and the faggot to enforce the adoption of their own antichristian creeds. When the Roman Emperors first embraced Christianity, they acted on the most liberal and tolerating principles, and allowed their subjects to adopt any creed, and to follow whatever mode of worship they preferred. In proof of this, Servetus referred to the history of Constantine,—and he might have quoted the famous edict of Milan, A.D. 313, declaring that “the two emperors

Constantine and his colleague Licinius proclaim to the world, that they have granted a free and absolute power to the Christians, and to all others, of following the religion which each individual thinks proper to prefer, to which he has addicted his mind, and which he may deem the best adapted to his own use. They carefully explain every ambiguous word, remove every exception, and exact from the governors of the provinces a strict obedience to the true and simple meaning of an edict which was designed to establish and secure, without any limitation, the claims of religious liberty.”—*Gibbon* iii. 245.

As to his knowledge of the Justinian law which the attorney had charged him with falsifying, he said that he had not seen it for twenty-four years; besides, added he, “Justinian did not belong to the times of the primitive and ancient Church, to which he had referred, but in his day many things had become corrupted, while the bishops had already commenced their tyranny, and were introducing criminal prosecutions into the Church,” “an able and pertinent reply,” says Rilliet, “by which the accused brought expertly out, the contrast between the pretended return of the Reformation to the practices of ancient Christianity; and the appeal to an ecclesiastical legislation begun during the epoch whence the Reformed dated the corruption of the Church.”—p. 145.

We learn from *Gibbon* that Justinian “piously laboured to establish with fire and sword the unity of the Christian faith,”* and in this respect he was a proper example for the enemies of Servetus. But he was a heretic as well as a persecutor, and, had he been in the power of Calvin, might have afforded him an opportunity of signaling his orthodoxy by an *auto da fe*. For Justinian, in his old age, “transgressed the measure of temperate heresy,” and was therefore a proper subject for the stake. When he lay on the bed of death he was pathetically entreated by a Bishop of Treves—of whose ghost Calvin might be deemed an incarnation,—“to recant and not let

* Notwithstanding, he applauds his own clemency to the heretics for suffering them to live—*cum sufficiat eis vivere*.—*Gibbon*, vii. p. 187, note.

his gray hairs be defiled with heresy. ‘Unless,’ said the holy comforter; ‘you destroy without delay what you have taught, unless you exclaim with a loud voice, I have erred, I have sinned, anathema (i. e. damnation) to Nestorius, anathema to Eutyches, you deliver your soul to the same flames in which they will eternally burn.’ He died and made no sign.”—*Decline and Fall*, vol. viii. p. 329.

To the charge of calumniating “the Brethren,” Servetus mildly replied, that, in disputed questions, it was a common practice to condemn the opinions of opponents without incurring or deserving the imputation of being a defamer—that the Reformers themselves differed one from another on certain religious questions—that Luther and Melancthon had written against *Œcolampadius* on the subject of the Eucharist and of Free-will. As to his being of a quarrelsome temper, he said that he never had been engaged in any quarrel but one, and that was in self-defence—probably meaning the dispute with some medical brethren, when he was a student in Paris.

One of the charges was, that he contradicted himself by first affirming that he would have held himself guilty of offending God, if he concealed and did not impart to others those doctrines which he held to be true—and yet abstained from speaking of them except to certain Doctors whom he named. To this charge he made the judicious reply that he communicated his opinions, only to the few who could estimate their value, but did not disseminate them among the common people—acting thus in obedience to the command of Christ, neither to hide his candle under a bushel, nor throw his pearls before swine. “I did not wish,” said he “to put forth the doctrine among weak people, nor among the Papists, where there is great cruelty and persecution.” “A skilful insinuation,” remarks *Rilliet*, “as to the difference which ought to exist in this respect between the Romanists and their opponents, for Servetus did not fail to perceive that his life was there concerned; and this is one trait more which exhibits him, through all this stage

of his trial, as giving proof of an ingenious mind, and as completely master of itself.”—p. 146.

The persecutors being fully aware that some such heretical opinions as those held by Servetus had made great progress in Italy, were anxious to discover if he had been in correspondence with any of the able and learned supporters of those opinions. But as they had no proofs, they could obtain no satisfactory answer to their inquiries. They then spoke of the printing of his book at Vienne, and of his connexion with Arnouellet the printer, and Gueroult the corrector of the press. Here his enemies congratulate themselves and one another, as if they had discovered a fact seriously affecting the veracity of their victim. According to their statement, when he was first asked if he had any connexion with Gueroult the corrector of the press, he acknowledged that he had—when asked the same question on the following day, he answered in the negative, and persisted in this negation—for it is suspected that in the interval he had found out that the object of the question was to discover whether Gueroult was not as great a heretic as himself—and whether he had not secret friends and abettors in Geneva. To screen his friend he sacrificed his truth. The motive at least was amiable, though the fact (if a fact) must be condemned. The Rev. W. K. Tweedie draws our attention to this matter more than once. He accuses Servetus of denying at one time what he affirmed at another—of stating what he knew to be untrue, and “this discovery,” he says, “is damaging to the character of one who professed to be maintaining a high religious cause;” and again he says, “the obvious falsehood of Servetus tends to lessen the sympathy which his trial occasions, inasmuch as it shows he had a design in visiting Geneva which he did not avow—no doubt the spreading of his opinions.” “Rilliet,” he adds, “is clearly of that mind, so that the falsehood persisted in gives reason to fear that in other points also, Servetus was not guided by the truth.”—(p. 147, *note*.) This is certainly making the most that can be made of the matter to the disadvantage of the heretic, as the Rev. W. K. Tweedie is pleased to

denominate him so frequently. But let not the disciples of Calvin hope that this statement, though it were as true as they can wish, and that the character of Servetus were "damaged" to their hearts' content, would diminish, by the weight of a scruple, the enormous mass of iniquity which lies on the shoulders of their master. By blackening Servetus they will never be able to whitewash Calvin. This, and all such attempts to "damage" Servetus, only show the greater extent and magnitude of his wrongs. If in a long perplexing examination the person on trial has not the benefit of an advocate or counsellor, is it by any means surprising if he should sometimes be confused and answer inconsistently?*

This however is not asked in vindication of Servetus. He would disclaim it, and Rilliet himself, by his own statement, saves the honour of the martyr. "He protested," says he "that he never had any connexion, even indirectly with Gueroult *on the subject of his work.*" Let the candid reader mark this—*on the subject of his work.* The work—as to its subject, form, contents—was entirely his own, and he had no occasion to be in any connexion as to those matters with the corrector of the press. By the agreement between him and Arnouellet for the printing of his work, it was particularly specified that he was to be the corrector of the press for himself;—a task to which he had been accustomed, and for which he was well qualified.† As to his having a design which he did not avow—what then? He was bound by no pledge to avow it. But it is more feasible to conclude that his chief design was to pass as quickly and safely as possible from Geneva to Zurich, and thence to Italy, or wherever he could find protection. Had the Rev. W. K. Tweedie exercised a little of that ingenuity for which the disciples of Calvin's school are distinguished, in trying to reconcile the grossest inconsistencies and contradictions in their

* The author knew a gentleman of the strictest honour and veracity who in a harassing cross examination by an *ingenious* barrister, in a Court of Law, became so confounded that he could not tell his own name.

† He said that his last work was imprinted from the suggestions of his own conscience, and that no one *corrected* it beside himself.

"Dixisse—*sc ultimum librum, ex conscientie sue instinctu imprimi curasse, nullumque alium quam sese correxisse eum.*"—*Allwoerd.* p. 76.

own homilies, he would have found no difficulty in discovering how Servetus could affirm in one sense that which he denied in another, and keep his veracity pure and unblemished.

Riliet strangely observes that "The perseverance of Servetus in denying that fact distinctly proves its reality." Though as the *Christian Reformer* justly remarks, "he has not adduced a particle of evidence in its support entitled to a moment's consideration. The sole pretence for this allegation of a seditious collusion with Calvin's enemies, is the simple fact, that two members of the Council before whom Servetus was tried, Berthelier and Perrin, who held a principal rank in the Republic, showed themselves, on one or two occasions, disposed to favour him; but there is no evidence whatever of any intriguing between them for political objects. M. Riliet has totally failed in supporting the allegation. Indeed his reasoning on this point is singularly weak, the logic being of that sort which establishes the direct contrary of what it was intended to demonstrate."*

Having wearied or exhausted their malice in charges of heresy, they entered into an investigation of his private life and moral character, with a view to prejudice the virtuous part of the community against him, and lessen the odium which they were in danger of incurring by their inquisitorial scrutiny, if they could convict him of any moral offence. Calvin had taken due care to prepossess the Judges with a belief that Servetus had led a dissolute life, and accused him of crimes of which it was physically impossible he could be guilty. No part of the conduct of the man of "consecrated intellect," though infamous throughout, was more atrocious than this. This fact, as recorded by Allwoerden may be read in

* The sermons of Calvinistic preachers are frequently of this description. Their peroration is often in express contradiction to their exordium. It is entertaining to hear a *Boanerges* of their fraternity, after a laerymose declamation on the inveterate depravity of man's heart, and his incapability of harbouring a good thought or doing a good work, exhorting his hearers to the practice of virtues which he has taken such pains to convince them—that it is not in their nature either to love or to cherish—and of the merit of which he has declared the utter nullity. "Does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

the margin,* “veiled,” to use an expression of Gibbon’s, “in the obscurity of a learned language.”

In reply to the inquiry when he first became physically injured, he said that he could not distinctly recollect, but that he supposed it was when he was about five years old. As to his last work, he had printed it with a good intention, and in obedience to the dictates of his conscience;—That he came to Geneva with no design to remain, but, as he had informed his hostess, to depart the day after his arrival;—That he had not even appeared abroad lest he should be discovered; and as to his religious opinions he would adhere to them until he should be convinced of their error.

The petition of Servetus to be allowed an advocate to speak in his behalf—sick as he was, in prison, and in a strange land, the language of which he but imperfectly understood—seems so just and reasonable that we might well wonder on what pretence it could be refused—especially by a Court pretending to be influenced by a love of justice—and above all, by a regard for the high and holy principles of Christianity. But Law-Courts acting under ecclesiastical authority have their own peculiar notions of justice, and often allege that they are acting with mercy, when perpetrating acts which less enlightened bodies not in the interests of their Church, hold to be atrocious cruelties. Some of their canon laws are framed solely with a view to the support of their own authority, irrespective of the laws of nations and the inalienable rights of man. The only wonder is that mankind are so besotted, and such slaves to superstition, as to suffer themselves to be priest-ridden and trampled down by bigots and persecutors.

John de Huss, when, like Servetus, he was sick and in prison, and unable to appear and speak for himself, at

* “Decima tertia erat questio, num matrimonii foedere junctus esset. Ad quam autem Servetus respondit, nunquam sibi uxorem ducendi animum fuisse, eo quod impotentem sese et herniosum esse, seivisset. Constituerant judices, si respondisset, sese uxorem non duxisse, hominem quærere, quomodo tam diu sibi temperare potuisset; verum responsio Serveti hanc quæstionem oppressit ac sustulit—Interim ex ea apparet, Calvinum persuasisse judicibus, Servetum cum multis aliis criminibus, tum scortatione ac adulterio, sese olim contaminasse.”—*Allwoerden*, pp. 76, 77.

the Council of Constance, desired to have an advocate to speak in his defence. This humble request was met by a decided negative—for, according to the canon law it was illegal to plead the cause of a man suspected of heresy—so that the holy legislators were sure of their prey: and by the same law all sorts of witnesses are admitted against a heretic. Such witnesses, from the time of our Saviour's trial, have been easily procured. A great many were found among the ecclesiastics of Bohemia, against poor Huss; and he had no small reason to complain, not only that he was refused an advocate, but that various intrigues and artifices were employed to prevent his being heard in Council.*

It was a part of Calvin's tactics to assail and calumniate the moral character of all who opposed him. We have seen how he accused Castellio of robbery for taking a fragment of wood out of a river; and now, without the slightest shadow of proof, he has Servetus accused of *scortation* and adultery. He had also the art of fathering his own heretical notions on his friends, and of giving expression, by proxy, to opinions which he was afraid to utter in his own person. When he was a student in Paris, he was requested by his friend Nicolas Cop to write for him an introductory lecture on his appointment to the Rectorship of the Paris University. This was a task which should have been executed with honour and fidelity—with such matter and in such a style as would create no suspicion that the lecture was not *bona fide* the composition of the Rector. But how did Calvin act? He interspersed it with his own heretical doctrine; and the Rector, "good easy man," never suspecting such treachery possible, read it, as he received it, to the no small astonishment of the Sorbonne philosophers. The oration was branded with their censure, and both the Rector and his "friend in need" were obliged to consult their safety by a precipitate flight. This, in a country not under priestly tyranny, might be considered as a pleasant joke, but in France it might have cost the lives both of the Rector and his friend.

* *Memoirs of Literature*, vol. vii. p. 201.

Calvin's conduct to Gruet, the comic poet, has few parallels in atrocity. On a paper affixed to St. Peter's Church in Geneva, were some contemptuous expressions applied to Calvin. The spies went forth to discover the author—Gruet's house was searched, and among his papers were found some fragments of ribald verses—nothing to prove that he was the author of the offensive placard, though he confessed, when under the torture, that he had posted it on the church. On examining his copy of Calvin's book against the Anabaptists the words "*All Fudge*,"* were found written on the margin. Will it be believed that, as Galiffe asserts, "the mortal erinne" of the reckless poet lay in having written those two words; that by Calvin's own instigation a process was drawn up against him, that he was tortured at intervals, sometimes twice a day, till he cried out in agony—"Finish me in mercy! I am dying!" "His body broken, his strength exhausted, he was carried from the dungeon to the scaffold, and there was struck from him the miserable portion of life that remained."

To preserve appearances, and cause the world to believe that Servetus was justly tried and condemned, the Council instructed Calvin to extract *verbatim* from the works of Servetus such passages as he deemed most heretical, and which their author should be constrained to answer in Latin. This was a task which, we may well suppose, was executed by the Reformer *con amore*. But he did not apply himself to the task with any sense either of candour or justice, but, as Wright states, rather as a partial reporter anxious to criminate, than a faithful copyist. If in a question of life and death it was a

* *The American Christian Examiner* for September, 1847, to which we are indebted for this and the preceding anecdote, asks—"Who would have imagined that a counterpart of Goldsmith's Burchell, in the Vicar of Wakefield, existed in a Swiss poet of the 16th century? But above all, who could have expected to find the austere argument of the sternest logician designated by the same phrase in which Burchell condenses his opinion on the elegant conversation of Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs? It is not, then, in fiction alone, that the ludicrous stands beside the pathetic. In actual experience there is often only one step from the comic to the tragic—from the jest book to the death warrant." Rilliet informs us, page 130, that, "Js. Gruet and Peter Ameaulx had seen their sentence of death or disgrace in a great measure occasioned by their attacks against the person and doctrine of M. John Calvin."

imperative duty not to “extenuate,” it was still more imperative to “set down nought in malice.” But he acted throughout in a spirit altogether contrary to this. In divers instances, instead of giving paragraphs or sentences entire, he gave his own construction of their meaning, misquoting, misrepresenting, exaggerating, and falsifying, and drawing such conclusions as would tell most to the injury of the defendant—and all this with a show of piety and learning on mysterious subjects of which neither he nor the Syndics, nor any one else, knew a tittle more than Servetus. As the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most absurd and unintelligible of doctrines, the denial of it is properly ranked at the head of all heresies. Calvin, therefore, began his accusatory extracts by stating of Servetus, that he affirmed all who believe a Trinity in the essence of God are tritheists, nor have any other than a tripartite and aggregate God, connotative, and not absolute—that the Hebrews deservedly wonder at the tripartite Deity introduced by Christians—that it affords a handle to the Mahometans to deny Christianity—and that there should be three incorporeal beings in the unity of God, is utterly inconsistent, and is no other than an imaginary Trinity—as to the word, he says it was an *ideal reason* from the beginning which now relates to him as man—was the exemplar, person, effigies, countenance, face, of the future man Jesus Christ. Most of the succeeding charges are what Calvin held to be errors respecting the generation, the substance, the flesh, the spirit, the body and soul of Christ, in which there is much unintelligible jargon about hypostasis, conception, and celestial dew—that in Christ there are both created and uncreated elements, substance of flesh, and substance of the word, and substance of God—the flesh of the word, the flesh divine of Christ, the celestial flesh of God, and eternal existence!

The answer of Servetus was expressed in terms of just indignation against the misrepresentations, garbled statements, and falsifications of his sentiments. He condemns Calvin for arrogating to himself such authority as was claimed by the masters of Sorbonne—for

making dogmatical assertions without any Scriptural evidence—he charges him with downright ignorance or wilful perversion of his meaning—affirms that he is a disciple of Simon Magus—and asks who can call a criminal accuser and a murderer, an orthodox minister of the Church? As to the article respecting the Trinity, he alleges it to be evident, from the authors quoted, that in the divine essence and unity of God there is not a real distinction of three invisible beings, but a personal distinction of the invisible Father and the visible Son. In proof and illustration of his meaning of the term *Person* he gives numerous quotations from Tertullian, Irenæus, and the “Recognitions” ascribed to St. Clement. He admits that he affirmed of the doctrine of the Trinity that it afforded a handle to Mahomet and the Turks against Christianity, and he persists in holding that opinion. He accuses his accuser of obstinately condemning what he does not understand—of taking for granted the very proposition to be proved—of making various allegations for which he does not produce the slightest evidence—of perverting his meaning, and quoting falsely, and dealing with him deceitfully. He beseeches him to assume the heart of a Christian, and to pray that he may be enlightened. Some of the charges he admits to be well founded, particularly that respecting infant baptism—and that mortal sin cannot be committed before the age of twenty—but “if you convince me of the contrary,” he adds, “I will not only receive it, but I will even kiss the ground you tread.”

In the circumstances of Servetus a document containing so many severe animadversions on Calvin, must be considered as highly indiscreet, for it tended only to exasperate his enemy without conciliating the favour of the judges. At the same time it may exalt our esteem for his character as a man not to be intimidated from giving full expression to his sentiments in the cause of sacred truth, even when in the hands of relentless persecutors. For a man like Calvin, the great Reformer, the founder of a sect, the head of the Church of Geneva, superior to the Pope of Rome, and, in the opinion of some, second

only to Luther, if not greater than he—for him to be braved by Michael Servetus, a Spaniard, a layman, an exile, a condemned heretic, and a prisoner in his hands on the eve of suffering by a public execution; and to be charged with ignorance, self-contradiction, deceit, falsehood, calumny, and with being a disciple of Simon Magus—this must have been peculiarly galling—and the pains he took to reply to Servetus show that he felt the force of the charges, and that he had to deal with a formidable antagonist, though opposed to him under every possible disadvantage.

The answer of Servetus was very concise.* Calvin made a reply consisting of twenty-four pages, or according to Wright, of above sixty pages *folio*, which he nevertheless entitled “a short confutation of the errors and impieties of M. Servetus, as it was offered by the ministers of Geneva to the magnificent Senate in obedience to their command.”

This reply, says La Roche, was written with great art—and he shows that it contained a most unfounded calumny. It concludes with affirming that whosoever shall think truly and prudently will acknowledge that the aim of Servetus was, by extinguishing the light of sound doctrine, to overturn all religion. “An accusation,” adds La Roche, “which appears to me altogether groundless. Whoever undertakes to overthrow all religion, has no religion at all; but the reading of Servetus’s works are sufficient to convince any one, that he was fully persuaded of the truth of Revelation.” The assertion indeed was as false as it was malicious. Servetus had the cause of true religion as much at heart as any of the Reformers, and he sought it where only it is to be found—in the Scriptures.†

* “The Spaniard had made haste to reply to the charges contained in the thirty-eight articles against him. Twenty-four hours had sufficed to draw up a pleading at once apologetic and hostile, in which he justified his own opinions and keenly combated Calvin. * * * In that document, prepared in haste, but exhibiting great clearness of understanding and keen exasperation, he employs as much precision in explaining his views as violence and bitterness in attacking Calvin.”—*Rilliet*, p. 169.

† *Rilliet* candidly admits that the charge of Calvin was “unjust and false, because he ascribed to Servetus intentions quite contrary to his real designs. In his book he sought to accomplish a serious work, and was animated by a profound respect and sincere faith in Christianity as he understood it.”—p. 172.

To Calvin's reply he made no regular answer, deeming it superfluous to argue further with an adversary so reckless of assertion and so determined on his destruction. While perusing it, however, he inserted some lines and marginal notes strongly expressive of his indignation, as we may judge by the following specimens—*Mentiris* (thou liest), frequently.—*Simon Magus!*—*impostor*—*sycophanta*,—*nebulo*—*perfidus*,—*impudens*—*ridiculus mus**—*cacodæmon*. He accuses Calvin of misrepresentation—and of imposing a meaning on his words which was never intended. In one of his notes he asks—“*Quis negat a Deo patre realiter distingui Filium?*” *Who denies that the Son is really distinct from God the Father.* Et actionis proprietate distingui personas, ego aperte docui (p. 273 libri mei) *I plainly taught that the persons were distinguished by a propriety of action.* Another of his marginal notes was expressed in these words: *In causa tam justa sum constans et mortem nihil reformido.* In a cause so just *I am resolved to persevere*; nor am I at all afraid of death.”

Calvin's reply was signed by himself and fourteen other divines. Next to their subscribed names Servetus wrote the following words—“Thus far we have had noise enough, indeed, and a crowd of subscribers to Calvin's dictates; but what places of Scripture have they produced to prove what they assert concerning the Son, that he is an invisible and really distinct being? They do not show any, nor can they ever do it. This they should have done had they acted up to the character of ministers of the gospel, especially since they pretend to value themselves to all the world upon nothing so much as this, that it has always been their resolution to teach nothing but what is demonstrated from plain and solid quotations of Scripture, but no such quotations can be found therein. My doctrine, therefore, is condemned by mere clamour and noise, without producing any reason or authority whatsoever.—Subscribed by M. Servetus,

* From the well-known line of Horace:

“*Parturiant montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.*”
The mountains labour, and a mouse is born.

who here is alone, but who hath Christ for his undoubted protector.”*

Here was a just and well-deserved reproach. Wherefore did Calvin and his fourteen† accomplices not give “plain and solid quotations” from Scripture to prove their doctrine and justify their persecution to death of a man who felt it to be his right and his duty to read and interpret the divine oracles for himself? Is it not manifest that they could find no such passage to quote? They chose to decline an appeal to the only true umpire in controverted questions of divinity. It was safer to rest on tradition and authority, and to put down by noise and clamour the heresies which they despaired of overcoming by “plain and solid quotations from Scripture.” As it was not *legal* to suffer a heretic to have an advocate, neither was it *prudent* to discuss, on the ground of Scripture, a doctrine which they had already decreed to be orthodox, nor suffer any response to a question, to the denial of which they had humanely annexed the penalty of fire and faggot!

* A copy of the original letter may be seen in *Allwoerden*, p. 95.

† Patet id ex ipsis CALVINI *Opus. Theol.* p. 764, unde sphalma typographicum forsân id esse videtur, quod CL. LA ROCHE *Tom.* 11. p. 158, *Bibl. Angl.* tredecim tantum eorum numeravit, quum, p. 191, in nota, subjuncta quatuordecim ei subscripsisse bene memorat. *Id.* p. 95.

CHAPTER VII.

Opinions of Servetus in advance of his age.—His use of the Koran.—Thoughts on capital punishment.—Excuse for having attended Mass.—Understood and judiciously applied the Scriptures which Calvin's conduct scandalized.—No Fanatic.—Correspondence of the Syndics with Vienne.—The property of Servetus claimed by Maugiron.—Cruelly treated in prison.—Supplicates the Council.—Sends a list of questions to be answered by Calvin, whom he accuses of wicked falsehoods and compares to Simon Magus.—Proposes to be tried against Calvin by the *lex talionis*.—Suspected, unjustly, of being concerned in the politics of Geneva.

THE trial of Servetus, by eliciting his opinions on some interesting topics, shows him to be far in advance of most, if not of all, of the eminent Reformers of his day. He seems to have held the belief which is now gaining ground, that Christianity is a religion not of forms and dogmas, but of great principles intended to operate on the heart and mind, to influence the whole conduct of life, and lead us to the highest moral improvement of which man's nature is susceptible. It is a light which always precedes every advance in the path towards moral perfection—and which would lead us forward “from good to better still, in infinite progression.” The Reformers were too much occupied in combating the more gross and palpable errors and superstitions of Romanism, to contemplate the sublime truths of revelation in their primitive simplicity and beauty. The Egyptian darkness was broken and in part dissolved; but the pure white light of heaven had not yet returned. The spirit of Christianity—which is a spirit “not of fear, but of power, of wisdom, and of a sound mind”—was still buried under a mass of rubbish collected by the Fathers and General Councils, by mitred tyrants and priest-ridden kings. The mind was forbidden to indulge its immortal privilege to think—or to think only in conformity to the mandate of ecclesiastical usurpers. Servetus did not regard this prohibition. He dared to think, and to inquire, and he proved himself, in some degree, worthy of the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

“What do you mean,” he was asked “by saying that

the truth begins to manifest itself and will spread more and more? Do you intend to say that your doctrine will be received, and that it is a doctrine of truth?" "I mean" said Servetus, "to speak of the progress of reform, as when the truth began to be declared in the time of Luther, and has spread even till now." He added that "the onward march of Reformation had not terminated, and that it will manifest itself still further concerning some things which he supposed to be not yet accurately explained." As to his own doctrine "he could not divine whether it would be received or not; but that he must hold it to be the truth till they showed him the contrary. Then exhibiting in a glimpse, without insisting on the foundation of his hopes, he adds, with address, that, at the commencement things are rejected which are afterwards received. The Reforms of Luther and Calvin have completely triumphed over the sentences of condemnation which awaited their first promulgation. Why should not mine emerge? Behold the mind of Servetus, concealed through policy, but indicated by implication!"—*Rilliet*, pp. 148, 149.

Servetus was right in affirming that at first some things are rejected which are afterwards received. There are numberless facts to prove and illustrate this—facts and discoveries in science and the arts now universally believed, but which in their origin were described as fabrications and impossibilities. While the spirit of Inquiry lives, new discoveries will be made; forgotten truths will be revived; and hidden doctrines brought to light. Fire, and sword, and priestly domination have long been formidable obstacles to the progress of Inquiry: and there are other obstacles, such as fashion and the world, superstition, fanaticism, and "spiritual wickedness in high places" that still continue to exercise a baleful influence against the progress of pure and undefiled religion. So far from the Reformation having terminated in the days of Servetus, it will not be terminated for ages yet to come. In his days only a few pioneers had gone forth to clear the way, and remove some of the more obvious obstructions in the path to the promised land. If one ecclesiastical

tical Sihon, or Og, or Procrustes was overthrown, others arose in his place with whom whole generations might have to contend before he could be vanquished. When one head was struck from the hydra, the monster's neck began to pullulate, and more heads arose to supply the want. A king of England might prove as potent an enemy as a despot of Rome, and the Presbyterian Inquisition of Geneva as terrible as that of Toledo. In the lapse of 300 years some progress has been made, but the goal is still far distant. What laborious efforts are made to obstruct every step in advance? What exertions to bolster up time-stricken and worm-eaten systems? Universities, where the light of knowledge should be still increasing in brilliancy and intensity, are seen to have dense clouds gathering over and around them—foul exhalations of the dark ages—redolent of monkery, and threatening to extinguish the pure and holy light of Christianity. Old superstitions are revived. “Dogs return to their vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” We sometimes begin to dread a relapse to the worship of relics, the dead bones and rottenness of pretended saints. Miracles continue to be wrought—demons exorcised—simpletons mystified—popular preachers describe the God of the universe as crucified—and the sun hiding his beams in horror at the sight of an expiring Deity!* Judges on the bench lay

* The following extract from the Sermons of a popular preacher will illustrate this:

“Oh! how shall I give utterance to that mystery of mysteries! I am lost in wonder! I am overwhelmed with awe! how shall I speak it! how shall I tell that that rejected, reviled, scorned, scoffed, scourged, crucified one was God, manifest in the flesh, the mighty God, the Lord God Almighty, the supreme Maker and Monarch of heaven and earth, ‘Lord of Lords, king of Kings, God over all blessed for ever.’ Oh! is it strange that the sun was afraid to look out on that sight, that the heavens were shrouded with darkness, when the Almighty maker was expiring, or that the earth shook with convulsive terror as if it trembled to support the cross on which its adorable Creator hung?”—*Sermons by the Rev. Hugh White*, pp. 51—53. *Dublin, Curry, 1834.*

No wonder that the preacher approached this tremendous “mystery of mysteries” with such overwhelming feelings of awe as made him struggle for utterance. This doctrine he considers as the “very sum and centre of christian doctrines and christian duties.”

Alas! alas! that such notions can not only be endured but lauded in congregations ostentatious of their christianity. When will mankind learn that “where mystery begins religion ends?”

flattering unction to the soul of the murderer, and assure him that belief in atoning blood will transport him pure and immaculate to join the angelic host in the highest heavens! Certain doctrines still hold their ground at which "reason stands aghast and faith is half confounded." What ideas have they of the great Creator, who think that he can suffer and die, or that he called into being the numberless generations of men, that he might damn them, with the exception of a little handful, to torments in soul and body without intermission in hell-fire for ever? If such thoughts are not blasphemous, what is blasphemy? Far preferable would it be to renounce belief in a God altogether than to invest him with such attributes as are worthy only to clothe the darkest impersonations of the spirit of evil. The atheist is a fool, but by what name shall we designate him who affirms that there is a God, and that his attributes are rage, revenge, inexorable, immitigable, and everlasting cruelty? In a word, such a God as the dark mind of Calvin portrayed, or as the imagination of Watts, before he became a Unitarian, depicted as the mutable and capricious tyrant of the Universe, a God whose name is "vengeance," seated with a "frowning face" on a "burning throne," mantled with "consuming fire," till his frowning face was calmed, and his wrath extinguished by the "rich drops of Jesus' blood"—the atoning sacrifice of a God-man or a man-God—and that man-God his own well-beloved Son!—and that Son identically one and the same with the Father Almighty! From such hideous and appalling descriptions the mind revolts disgusted, and rejoices to find it written in the records of Inspiration that "God is love."

Rillict states, that Servetus, being "assailed as to the use which he had made of the Koran, replied that he had cited it for the greater glory of our Lord Jesus Christ—(probably by showing the greater excellence of the Gospels, and the superiority of Christ to that of Mahomet) and because the said Koran abounds in what is good; and that even though that book were bad, he might employ the good which it contained; for in a wicked

book one might find good things." Rilliet has the honesty to say that the charge was, in truth, absurd, and the answer was nothing more than just. It would have been well if the persecutors themselves had taken a few lessons from the Koran. Some of the high-priests of Calvinism might learn from it the duty of practising certain virtues of which they have much need, particularly the virtues of justice and charity, which with the Mahometans, as Gibbon states, "descends even to the animal creation. The Koran repeatedly inculcates, not as a merit, but a strict and indispensable duty, the relief of the indigent and unfortunate. Benevolence is the foundation of justice, since we are forbidden to injure those whom we are bound to assist. A prophet may reveal the secrets of heaven and futurity, but in his moral precepts he can only repeat the lessons of our own hearts."—*Decline and Fall*, vol. ix. p. 277.

On the subject of capital punishment Servetus entertained notions far more accordant to the genius of Christianity, and to sound political wisdom, than those by which most governments are conducted. He may have thought that *all* punishments should have for their object not the destruction but the correction of the criminal. Being accused of holding "the belief that young people under the age of twenty are not subject to sin, nor liable to just punishment, he affirmed that he meant to speak only of their being exempt from capital punishment, and not at all of the suppression of judicial prosecutions and chastisements like the whip, the galleys, the prison, and other kinds."

Being questioned as to his opinion of the Mass, and on his practice of attending its celebration in Vienne, he replied, that he "reckoned it wicked—and that in attending it he followed the example of the Apostle Paul who went to the temple like the Jews: but confessed that in doing so he had sinned through the fear of death." This was at least, an honest confession, and no small palliation of a practice which he condemned. He might also have pleaded for the same forgiveness in this matter as the prophet granted to the captain of the

Syrian host, when he went with his royal master to worship in the house of Rimmon. Or had he lived in another age and in another country, he might have contended for the necessity of a little "*occasional conformity*," by which many professional Christians have belied their principles, played the hypocrite, and acted as traitors to their own conscience, not through the fear of death, but for the sake of some temporal gratification, or paltry distinction, a vain title, or a mess of pottage. On this point, it does not appear that the persecutors pressed him close. They had themselves but recently turned away from the celebration of Mass, and if any spark of shame were unextinguished in their breasts, they would have felt ashamed to lay this to his charge as a crime.

It must be obvious to the reader that Servetus, in his examination, showed that he understood the Scriptures, and could apply them as a rule of conduct, infinitely better than Calvin and his slaves. In explanation and justification of his own conduct he quoted, with promptitude and facility, scriptural authority and example. In his petition he asserted that it was altogether contrary to the doctrine of the apostles, and their disciples, and the ancient christian church, to put men to death for their opinions. As this was a question of great importance, and as Calvin was thought to be "mighty in the Scriptures," why did he not come forth with his array of scriptural precepts and examples to confute the heresiarch, and inform the world by what authority he assumed a power which was never claimed or exercised by the primitive christians? He should have confuted his enemy by the legitimate weapons of controversy. He should have told us the names of those whom Christ and his apostles sentenced to death for heresy; with the time, the place, and the kind of their punishment. Whom did Christ—whom did Peter—whom did Paul—condemn to die? Paul indeed has spoken of burning the body—but whose? His own, "Though I give my body to be burned and have not charity (love or benevolence) it profiteth me nothing." The most heroic act

of christian zeal in behalf or defence of christian truth which it is possible for a man to do or to suffer, is nothing without charity. This the apostle says of himself. What would he have said of the act of burning the body, not of himself, but of another, for the glory of God?

The enemies of Servetus stigmatize him as a fanatic, but he shows more cool reason and less of a fanatical spirit than his accusers. He had none of the presumption of Calvin. He did not dogmatically assert that he could not err; nor did he, like some of our modern fanatics and conscience-screwers, boast that he knew by a voice from within or from above, that he was on the only unerring path to heaven, and that all who took a different road were hastening to perdition. He formed his religious opinions, according to the best of his judgment, from the Scriptures alone, and as he had no system to support, he was in less danger and under less temptation of distorting their meaning; of drawing from obscure texts, still more obscure conclusions, or of darkening luminous revelations by the smoky comments of a pretended orthodoxy. His mind had been enlarged and liberalized by other studies than those of theology, the almost invariable tendency of which, when not commingled with other studies, is to contract the mind, and distort the judgment. He brought to the perusal of the Scriptures, not the prejudices of a monk, the gloom of an ascetic or the bigotry of a creed-monger, but the spirit of a philosopher and the feelings of a christian.

While the prosecution against Servetus was proceeding in Geneva, the Syndics opened a correspondence with the magistrates of Vienne; addressing them in a highly adulatory style, as noble, sage, illustrious, and magnificent—their good neighbours and very dear friends—*noz bons voysins et bien chiers amys**—informing them that Servetus had been captured—requesting a copy of the sentence of death which had been pronounced upon

* Notwithstanding these fine holiday and lady terms, each of the parties would have been delighted to make a roaring-bonfire of the other. Rilliet has published their letters in the original old French.

him, and of the evidence on which it was founded, to aid them in the process which they had instituted, which they were desirous of bringing to a proper conclusion, and of accomplishing all that their very dear friends could wish to be done in such a matter. They conclude by saying, that they pray that it may please God to grant them happiness and prosperity.

In reply, the Syndics received a letter from the Vice-Bailiff and the King's Procurator of Vienne, dated August 26th, 1553, giving thanks for the information, enclosing a copy of the sentence of death passed upon Servetus, stating, that as he had already been condemned, they could not consent to have any other judgment passed—and requesting that he might be sent back to Vienne, where the sentence should be carried into effect, in such a way as to render all farther evidence superfluous. In confident expectation that this request would be granted, they had given credentials to their officer, whom they sent to Geneva, to conduct the prisoner back.

But Calvin and his friends were not thus to be cheated of their prey, and deprived of such an opportunity of displaying their godly zeal. The matter being referred to the Council, it was resolved that a "gracious letter should be sent to Vienne, intimating that they would not give up the prisoner, but would do full justice upon him." "Here," says Rilliet, "we see that the tribunal of Geneva was provoked to emulation, and wished, at the very least, to have the appearance of understanding its business as well as others, without, however, pledging itself as to the final decision." Such a pledge indeed would have been a work of supererogation; for it might be foreseen, without the vision of a prophet, that they would not dare to pass an indirect censure on the justice of their "good neighbours and very dear friends," by subjecting the prisoner to a milder sentence than had been pronounced by the Inquisition.

Notwithstanding, it was thought proper to ask Servetus himself, whether he would rather abide the issue of his trial in Geneva, or return to Vienne. He threw himself, in tears, at the feet of the magistrates, and

entreated that he might be dealt with by them as they pleased, rather than be sent back to a tribunal, at which sentence had been already pronounced, and from which he could expect no mercy. He flattered himself, perhaps, that he might still have some chance of a lenient judgment, if not of an acquittal, in a protestant court of justice. The result showed how fatally he was mistaken.

On the 1st of September, the Council received a letter from M. de Maugiron, Lieutenant-General of the king of France in Dauphiné; informing them that the property of Servetus, amounting in value to four thousand crowns, had been confiscated, and bestowed on the son of Maugiron; the Council was therefore requested to obtain from Servetus a list of his debtors, with the amount of the sums respectively due by them. Further, says Rilliet, who gives us this information, (p. 155) “the noble correspondent, forgetting a little the medical aid which Servetus had rendered to him, or wishing, perhaps, to clear himself from the suspicion of having favoured his escape from Vienne, declared that he was very happy to learn that he was in the hands of the magistrates of Geneva; and he ‘blessed God for the assurance which he had, that they would take better care than the ministers of justice at Vienne had done, and do such justice as that he would not have the means of again teaching, writing, or publishing his false heretical doctrines.’ This appeal to the self-esteem of the Council of Geneva, contributed, perhaps, along with the desire of rivalling in severity a catholic tribunal, to bring in at last a sentence of condemnation against Servetus. Who knows, in fact, to what extent the fear of appearing worse Christians, and less scrupulous magistrates, than the people of Vienne, operated on the minds of the Genevese judges?”

This observation of Rilliet affords the Rev. W. K. Tweedie an opportunity too precious to be lost, of endeavouring to shift the “final condemnation” of Servetus from the “remorseless implacability” of Calvin, to the influences of the magistrates, and their fears, forsooth,

of being deemed worse Christians than the Inquisitors of Vienne! All such attempts excite no feelings but indignation and disgust.

As centuries might elapse before such a victim as Servetus could be procured for the altar of bigotry and intolerance, we are not to be surprised that the two cities of Vienne and Geneva should each be jealous of the other having the honour of celebrating the sacrificial rite. A man like him, a physician distinguished by his genius, his learning, his virtues, was worth a whole hecatomb of ordinary mortals. A gracious providence, as some of the great divines argued, had led him to Geneva, to give them an opportunity of demonstrating their holy zeal, and proving that their orthodoxy was not to be surpassed by that of the long dominant hierarchy of the Popedom. Some rash mortals had dared to accuse them of heresy; but they had it now in their power to efface the foul stigma. The burning a heretic would declare their abhorrence of heresy, and prove how much superior they were to all such weak considerations as the rights of humanity; and how much the orthodoxy of Inquisitors was to be preferred to the heterodoxy of the Scriptures, and the example of men-burners, the Neros, and Domitians of Pagan Rome—to that of men-savers like Christ and his Apostles! Servetus, on being asked to comply with the wishes of Maugiron, declined it, saying, that his debts did not affect the principal cause. He may have thought his friend or patient somewhat too precipitate in his claims, and unnecessarily warm in congratulating the Genevese. He did not choose to gratify the cupidity of Maugiron at the expense of his debtors. But wherefore did they not extort confession by the torture, as their “good neighbours and very dear friends” of Vienne would have done? Had they been promised a moiety of the spoil, they might have had recourse to this expedient; but having no peculiar interest in the business, happily for Servetus, the torture was not applied. But though not subjected to the rack and the wheel, he was doomed to suffer much from the severity of his confinement, which was rigid and cruel in the extreme, as we

learn from his own complaints. By being robbed when first thrown into prison, he had been deprived of the means of procuring common necessaries. His dungeon was defiled by dirt and vermin; he was denied the means of preserving cleanliness, troubled with cold, and labouring under a complication of diseases, cholic and rupture. Wearied out by their tedious and harrassing proceedings, and hoping that some vestige of humanity might be found in the breasts of the judges, he addressed to them the following supplicatory letter:—

“ MOST HONOURED LORDS,

“ I humbly beseech you, that you would be pleased to put a stop to those great delays, or leave off prosecuting me as a criminal. You see that Calvin is put to his last shift, and knows not what to say, and is resolved that I should rot in a prison to please himself. (*Here he describes the misery of his personal condition which the reader may imagine.*) I presented you another petition which was according to God: and to prevent the good effect of it, Calvin has quoted Justinian against me. Certainly he is a very unhappy man to allege against me what he does not believe. He himself does not believe what Justinian says, *De Sacrosanctis Ecclesiis, et de Episcopis et Clericis* and other things relating to religion: he knows very well that the Church was then corrupted. 'Tis a great shame for him to do so; but 'tis a greater shame still, that he should have kept me a close prisoner these five weeks without alleging any one passage against me. (Any one passage that is to the purpose.)

“ My Lords, I also desire you to allow me an Attorney, or an Advocate, as you have allowed one to my adversary, who did not want it so much as I do, who am a foreigner, unacquainted with the customs of this country. And yet you have granted his request and denied mine, and set him at liberty before you took cognizance of my cause. I desire that my cause may be removed to the Council of *Two hundred* with my Petitions; and if I can appeal to them, I actually do it, protesting against all charges and expenses, and insisting upon *pœna talionis*, not only against the first accuser, but also against Calvin, who has taken the cause upon himself. From your prison at Geneva,

“ MICHAEL SERVETUS.

“ *Pleading his own Cause.*

“ *Sept. 15, 1553.*”

Many from enmity to Calvin, as well as from a sense of justice to Servetus, were disposed to take part against the persecutors, and as a last resource may have advised him to have recourse to the *lex* or *pœna talionis*, by which an accuser, if he failed to prove his accusation, would incur the penalty to which the accused would be liable if found guilty.

It was not, however, to be expected that any such proposal as that of Servetus, though strongly expressive of confidence in his own innocence, would receive attention in a state where the claims of justice were so scandalously disregarded, and where all things were swayed by the nod of Calvin. *Omnia nutu Calvini gerebantur*. That nothing however might be left undone by which there could be any possible chance of averting or mitigating impending fate, he wrote another supplicatory letter to the Senate, declaring that he was falsely accused by Calvin of holding erroneous notions of the soul's immortality and the incarnation of Christ, which he held to be two of the most important articles of the Christian faith, and that he who denied them merited the severest punishment. He implored the judges that his accuser might be put in prison as well as he, till the suit was terminated, and that if decided against him, and he was unable to convict Calvin of error, he would be content to suffer any punishment they should think proper to inflict. In fine, he besought them that his false accuser should be subjected to the *pœna talionis*, and that if he should not be convicted of the crimes laid to his charge, he, Servetus, would be content to die. He ended by a thrice repeated demand for justice. "Justice, my Lords,—justice,—justice!"

To this letter he added a list of interrogatories which he desired might be proposed to Calvin:—

1. Whether he had not by the hands of Trie written to Lyons concerning Michael Villanovanus, alias Servetus, and what were the contents of his letter?
2. If with that letter he had not also sent some sheets of a book by the same M. Servetus, containing the title, index, and beginning of the said book entitled *Christianismi Restitutio*?

3. Whether it be not true that the whole was sent to show it to the Officials of Lyons that the said Servetus might be prosecuted as it appeared by the event ?
4. Whether about a fortnight after, he sent by the same Trie above twenty Latin letters, (which the said Servetus had written to him) according to the desire of his enemies at Lyons, that the said Servetus might be more easily prosecuted and convicted, as it appeared by the event ?
5. Whether he was not informed since, that by virtue of the said accusation the said Servetus was burned in effigy, and his estate confiscated, and that he would actually have been burnt, had he not made his escape ?
6. Whether he knows not that it does not become a minister of the Gospel to prosecute a man to death ?

To these interrogatories he subjoined that there are *four* cogent reasons for subjecting Calvin to the same punishment as that to which he would subject the person whom he falsely accuses:—

1. Because no man ought to be prosecuted like a criminal for any doctrinal point, as I have shown in my petition, and shall make it appear more at large by the ancient Doctors of the Church ; and therefore he has made a very ill use of a criminal prosecution, and acted against the character of a minister of the Gospel.
2. Because he is a false accuser, as you may see by these papers, and as it will plainly appear by the reading of my book.
3. Because he designs to stifle the doctrine of the Church by frivolous and calumnious arguments as you plainly see by my papers, for he has inserted in them wicked and enormous falsehoods.
4. Because he follows, in a great measure, the doctrine of Simon Magus, contrary to all the Doctors that ever lived in the Church ; and therefore, being a magician, he ought not only to be condemned, but also expelled from your city ; and his estate ought to be adjudged to me as an equivalent for the loss of mine which he has occasioned. This, my Lords, is what I desire of you.

MICHAEL SERVETUS,

Pleading his own Cause.

From his prison he also addressed a letter to Calvin, which, far from being submissive or conciliatory, might seem intended only to exasperate and defy. He appears to have felt for his adversary as Mordecai, the Jew, felt for the wicked Haman, and would not condescend to "bow and do reverence," to a man whom he had so much reason to contemn. As the arrogance of Calvin had made many his enemies, it is thought, not without reason, that they instigated Servetus to speak of him contemptuously. La Roche is so strongly of this opinion, that he deems it undeniable. He finds it on a passage which he quotes from a letter of Calvin to Farell, on a passage in Calvin's life by Beza, and on a note written on that passage by a minister of Geneva, in the sixteenth century, stating that some of the principal magistrates, who wished by the Spaniard to vent their hostility, induced him to pour forth his reproaches against Calvin, as the means of securing their favour.

In his letter to Calvin he accuses him of ignorance of the first principles of things, and especially of the great principle that all action is done by contact, *omnis actio fit per contactum*. He accuses him also of maintaining that the law of the Decalogue is still in force. In his letters to the magistrates, instead of appearing as one acting on the defensive against Calvin, he becomes his assailant, and boldly charges him with various misdemeanours, altogether unbecoming the character of a minister of the gospel. He repeatedly designates him by the title of Simon Magus, no doubt from some real or fancied resemblance in the character of the Reformer, to that of the magician, "who bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one, and they said "This man is the great power of God." Calvin also gave out that himself was some great one, and the Genevese, who were "bewitched," may have said of him as the Rev. W. K. Tweedie says, with equal truth, that he was "a chosen vessel of the Lord." But whatever were the opinions of Calvin's idolaters, Servetus had too much reason to know, that

the heart of his persecutor was “not right in the sight of God,” but “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

Notwithstanding the strong expression of his opinion, that doctrinal points are not a just subject of criminal prosecution, his proposal of the *lex talionis* with his saying, that if “he had written to infect the world with a belief of the soul’s mortality,” he would condemn himself to death, has given occasion to the Rev. W. K. Tweedie to infer “that Servetus, in common with his age, held the dogma, that for *opinions* men might be (justly) put to death.” (p. 189. *note.*) But this, like many other Calvinistic inferences, is altogether unauthorized by the premises. So far was he from holding such a dogma, that one of the charges against him by the Attorney-General was, that he did not hold it; but that, on the contrary, he denied the right of magistrates to punish heretics with death. See page 88.

The 6th of the interrogatories, which he wished to be proposed to Calvin, demonstrates clearly that he thought a minister of the gospel was altogether out of his province when engaged in a criminal prosecution for points of faith. The same judgment is expressed strongly in the first of the *four reasons*; and what he proposes in the fourth, is only a declaration of his willingness to submit to the law of *lex talionis*, which, in his circumstances, he might fairly do, as a demonstration of his veracity, not as an approval of the law. What he says is only the strongest mode he could employ, his *ultima ratio*, of declaring the utter falsehood of Calvin’s assertion: and though he might literally condemn *himself* to death, he does not say, that he would pass the same sentence on another. The greatest punishment to which he says Calvin ought to be subjected for his crimes, was banishment from the city, and the transfer of his property to Servetus, in compensation of the property of which he had caused Servetus to be robbed.

The friends and abettors of Calvin, are exceedingly anxious to find Servetus implicated in the political transactions of Geneva, and discover some other cause

than the imputation of heresy, for putting him to death. They pretend that he had friends in the city, with whom he carried on a treasonable correspondence. According to Rilliet "he was condemned not at all as the opponent of Calvin, scarcely as a heretic, but essentially as seditious. Politics acted a more important part than theology towards the close of the trial." (p. 131.) But this is all sheer invention, for which they have not been able to produce the slightest proof; and they might as well pretend that he was in correspondence with the Pope, or the Dalai Lama. Neither in the trial nor in the sentence, is there any charge of a political nature. The whole of the malicious invention seems to have originated in some appearance of sympathy, which men of christian disposition felt for the injured stranger. No admission of the kind was extorted from Servetus, nor did Calvin himself dare to attack him in a point in which he saw him to be invulnerable. He was minutely examined as to his country, his parents, his studies, his publications, his correspondence, in short as to every particular in which his persecutors thought they might have a chance of success: but no intimation is given in any part of the process—nor even in the final sentence—of his being in league with any of the politicians of Geneva. Hence the conclusion is irrefragable that no such connexion existed. It would be gratifying, however, to christian readers to learn that there were some spirits in Geneva, to whom the rights of humanity were dear, and who thought that even a heretic was not to be hunted down and torn in pieces like a wolf that had invaded the fold. It may therefore be admitted, that one or two such friends contrived to inform him, from time to time, of the feelings and proceedings of the Council. They may have instigated him to become the assailant of Calvin, and to appeal, as he did, to the *lex talionis* as the most efficient mode of averting his danger and obtaining an acquittal. An order was given to have the windows of his prison nailed down; and from this circumstance it may be fairly inferred that he had received communications from without, relative, no doubt,

to that which concerned him most—his own trial—but nothing of a seditious character; for what possible interest could a stranger and a prisoner, in the condition of Servetus, have in the political factions of Geneva, or, had he been disposed to take the part of any one of them, what benefit could his powerless partizanship bring either to himself or others? It does not appear, nor is there any reason to imagine, that politics had a tittle more to do in the end than in the commencement of this infamous and nefarious persecution.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Cantons consulted.—Calvin writes to the ministers.—Their replies, and fears of being suspected of heresy.—King Henry the Eighth tampering with conscience.—Last letter of Servetus to the Council.—Amadaeus Perrin proposes in vain to refer his cause to the Council of Two Hundred.—Sentence pronounced.—Reflections.

As the death of a man like Servetus, for heresy, could not fail to produce much excitement and expose his murderers, especially Calvin, the prime mover of all their proceedings, to well-merited reprobation, the magistrates of Geneva, before they pronounced the sentence on which they had determined, wished to obtain the concurrence of the magistrates and ministers of the other Protestant Cantons of Switzerland. They hoped to lessen the odium of their iniquity by having it shared with their neighbours. Accordingly, on the 21st of September, 1553, they despatched their messenger, Jacquemoz Jernoz, with a letter and copies of the papers passed between Servetus and Calvin, to the magistrates and pastors of Berne, Zurich, Schaffhausen, and Bale. In the letter to the illustrious, learned, and honourable ministers of the word—their good and particular friends—they stated that Servetus was their prisoner—that he had published books containing innumerable passages against their religion—that he was now under trial for his heresies, which they were anxious to suppress—that,

though they had no distrust of their own ministers' judgment, they besought their good friends, for the honour of God, to take the subject into serious consideration, and favour them with their advice.

It would have been well if, before entering on such consideration, they had ascertained and declared on what principle, either of human or divine justice, the prisoner was brought to trial at all.

Though Servetus from the first deeply felt the iniquity of their whole proceedings, and could not admit that either Geneva or the other States had any right whatever to question him about his religious opinions, he made no objection to the States being consulted. In the case of Bolsec they had shown more lenity than Calvin. They had no feelings of personal hostility against him. Some of them were said to have no cordial attachment to his chief persecutor. From them he might have some chance of favour, but, where the influence of Calvin prevailed, none.

As it was possible that the Cantons thus addressed might entertain more Christian sentiments than such as would justify their sanction to the punishment of a heretic by death, Calvin resolved that his influence should not be wanting to induce them to adopt his own views of the subject. the *Christian Reformer* remarks, that "It was not in Calvin's nature, calmly to await the result of this appeal. He well knew how important it was to the accomplishment of his great purpose—the destruction of his enemy—to secure the suffrages of the heads of the Protestant Churches of the Confederation. If it was not beneath him to tamper in private with the members of the court entrusted with the trial, in order to bring them over to his views, he could scarcely scruple to avail himself of his personal influence with his clerical brethren to solicit their decision in his favour. Accordingly, before the papers could be sent off, he despatched his private communications. On the 7th of September he wrote to Bullinger at Zurich, informing him of the determination of the Council to ask his advice. 'It is in spite of us,' he says, 'that they give you this

trouble; but they have arrived at that pitch of madness and rage, that they look with suspicion on all that I say. Our brother Walter [who was married to one of Bullinger's daughters] will tell you more.' He had fully informed Walter of his wishes, and could depend on his friendly offices with his distinguished relation."

The answer of Bullinger was as favourable as Calvin could wish, viz.—“The Lord has given the magistrates of Geneva a fair opportunity of clearing themselves and their Church from heresy, by delivering Servetus into their hands. Therefore if they treat that rascal as he deserves, all the world will see that the Genevese hate blasphemers; that they prosecute with the sword of justice those heretics who are truly obstinate, and that they maintain and vindicate the glory of God!”*

On the 15th of the same month, Calvin wrote to Sultzer, the minister of Basle, to the like effect. He commences his epistle by giving a brief account of Servetus and his pestiferous dogmas—how Bucer, a faithful minister of Christ and of clement disposition, had affirmed in the pulpit that such a heretic deserved to have his entrails plucked out, and to be torn in pieces—how he had escaped from the prison of Vienne, wandered through Italy for months, and at last appeared in Geneva, where, by his (Calvin's) instigation, one of the Syndics had committed him to prison. *Unus ex Syndicis, me auctore, in carcerem duci jussit.* He deems it a shame, that while papists are so keen and courageous, and show such a spirit of vengeance in support of their superstitions as even to shed innocent blood, Christian magistrates should have so little of the same spirit in defending certain truth:—thus intimating that Papists are not Christians. He then expatiates on the errors of Servetus, his attempts to subvert religion from its foundations, and his diabolical pride and obstinacy in listening to no admonition, and his giving so little hope of amendment that he dares to asperse even those holy

* “Si ergo huic rependeret Amplissimus Senatus quod blasphemus nebulari debetur, totus orbis cerberet Genevenses blasphemos odisse hæreticos, qui vere sunt pertinaces hæretici, gladio justitiæ persequi, et gloriam majestatis Divinæ vindicare.”—*Cal. Epist. et Responsa*, p. 78.

men Capito and Œcolampadius by ascribing to them some of his own abominations,* and wondering by what spirit Œcolampadius was led to depart from the sentiments which he once entertained. Having thus endeavoured to infuse a portion of his own spirit into the bosom of his friend, he says, “I will only add, that I wish to apprise you that the quæstor of the city, who is the bearer of this letter, is rightly affected in this business, so that he will not fail as to the consummation I desire.† Would that your old disciples were actuated by the same spirit!”

To secure the interest of Farell, minister of Neufchatel, in his behalf, he wrote to inform him of the imprisonment of Servetus by his instrumentality—*retinendum putavi*—how his Nicolas, subjecting himself to the *lex talionis*, had prosecuted him for capital offences—that there were forty heads of accusation against him which the Senate deemed valid, and, in consequence dismissed Nicolas free—that he hoped he might be condemned to die, but that the severity of his punishment might be softened.‡ “The common cant,” says Dr. Benson, “of all persecutors and inquisitors, who first bring innocent persons into distress, and when they have accomplished their ruin, and delivered up a heretic to the civil magistrate to be burned alive, desire they would have mercy upon him!”

Farell, in reply to his amiable correspondent, says that it was by a wonderful dispensation of God that Servetus was brought to Geneva—he wishes that he may become wise, though late—that it would be a great

* *Tantum enim abest a spe resipiscentiæ, ut non dubitet sanctis viris Capitoni et Œcolampadio aspergere hanc maculam, quasi socii fuerint. Quum ostensæ essent Œcolampadii epistolæ, dixit se mirari, quo spiritu abductus foret a priore sensu. Hæcne we may understand that some of the doctrinal opinions of Œcolampadius at one time harmonized with those of Servetus. Calvin concludes his letter by stating that three of their pious brethren were recently burned at Lyons, and that the flames were kindled in several parts of Gaul for similar exhibitions.*

† *Tantum unius rei te admonitum volo, Quæstorem urbis, qui tibi has literas reddet, in hac causa recto esse animo, ut saltem exitum quem optamus, non fugiat.*

‡ *Calvini Epistolæ.—Christian Reformer.*

Spero capitalem saltem fore judicium; pænæ vero atrocitatem remitti cupio.—Changed, perhaps, from burning to beheading. “The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.”—Prov. xii. 10.

miracle, if, being seriously converted, he should suffer only one death, though deserving many myriads of deaths—if he should endeavour to edify the present generation, after all the efforts he had made to injure such multitudes, past, present, and to come.* God grant that those who are praised for inflicting a just punishment upon thieves and sacrilegious persons, may do their duty in this case, by taking off a man who has so long and so obstinately persisted in his heresy, and ruined so many people. In desiring that the severity of the punishment should be mitigated, you act the part of a friend towards one who is your greatest enemy. But I beseech you to act in such a way that no one may hereafter be daring enough to come and publish new doctrines and occasion so much disturbance. If the Pope† condemns pious men for heresy, and infuriate judges iniquitously persecute the innocent as if they were guilty, what madness is it thence to infer that heretics are not to be destroyed for the benefit of the godly?—When I read how Paul, (*Acts xxv. 11*) declared that if he were an offender and had committed things worthy of death, he would not refuse to die, I should think myself deserving of the severest punishment that can be inflicted if I seduced any one from the faith and doctrine of Christ. Verily I cannot pass a sentence on others different from that which I pronounce on myself.‡

From the tenor of this letter it was easy for Calvin to conclude that he had Farell's full assent and consent to

* *Mira est Dei dispensatio in Serveto, quod istue venerit. Utinam vel serio sapiat. Magnum sane miraeulum erit si mortem perferat serio ad Deum conversus, et occumbens una morte, qui multas myriadas eommeritus est, si omnes contendat ædificare præsentés, qui multis jam sublatís et qui supersunt, adde etiam venturis nocere studuit.*

† *Si Pontifex pius damnet hæreseos, et furentes judices inique exequuntur in innocentes id quod debetur hæreticis: quæ amentia est inde colligere non perdendos hæreticos, ut piis sueurratur?*

‡ *Addidi, me quam dignissimum esse quovis supplicio, si a fide et doctrina Christi quenquam avoarem. Sane non possum de aliis aliud sentire quam quod de me statuo.*

In this case Farell is righteous over-much. Neither the words nor the example of the apostle authorize him to condemn and punish others as he would condemn and punish himself. If a man be conscience-stricken and sentence himself to death for some crime, has he any right to pronounce a similar sentence on a similar criminal? If his right hand offends him and he chops it off, what principle of Christianity would justify him for desiring that all right hands guilty of a like offence should be amputated?

condemn Servetus to die—and not only this, but that his friend would laud him for acting in holy emulation of the Pope by leading a heretic to the stake.

To the pastors of Frankfort Calvin wrote on the Calends of September, informing them that Servetus was a prisoner—and that there was no species of impiety which the wild beast (*bellua*)—had not raised up as from the depths of the infernal regions—but he entertains a hope that he will speedily be brought to punishment—*propediem, ut spero, daturus est pœnas*. His principal object in writing is to inform them where were deposited the books of Servetus, in every page of which they would find matter to fill them with horror. He beseeches them to put a stop to the spreading pestilence, and to have all those books committed to the flames—as might be safely done without leave asked of the magistrates.

We come now to take a brief review of the replies of the Churches and Magistracies addressed to their Excellencies the Syndics, to the Senate of the Republic of Geneva—Lords and beloved fellow citizens.

The Church of Berne which, according to Rillict, “was the first consulted, besides blaming the heresies of Servetus, condemned also his pride and his want of moderation. They state that they are sufficiently apprized of the endeavours of Satan to extinguish the light of truth—that they have inspected the dogmas of Servetus—that they cannot conscientiously approve of what he says concerning the substance and form of God and the mystery of the holy Trinity—the soul and flesh of Christ—mortal sin—and Pædobaptism. In effect, he has reckoned himself free to call in question all the essential points of religion, totally to invert it by new explanations, or corrupt it by the regenerated poison of ancient heresies—especially those of the Sabellians, the Noetians, the Priscillianists, the Anthropomorphites, Apollinarists, Valentinians—and, lest he should appear untainted by the modern heresies, he flagellates, with horrible severity, the doctrine of infant baptism. Your own ministers, they say, will make these things sufficiently manifest, and you require no examination of them

more strict than theirs. Of the vigilance and zeal of our brethren we entertain no doubt. We pray God that he may give you a spirit of prudence, of counsel, and of fortitude, that you may avert this plague from your own and other churches—and at the same time, may you do nothing which can be deemed unbecoming Christian magistrates.

The magistrates of Zurich, in reply, entreated the Council of Geneva strenuously to oppose the heresy, as it occasioned great scandal. The Divines expressed themselves more fully, as may be learned from their letter, which has been preserved by Calvin. They enter into a consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity, and deem it a great wickedness to call it in question. They repeat the language in which Servetus had spoken on that mysterious subject, with much unintelligible farrago of their own about hypostasis, and substance of flesh, and substance of divinity, and two natures, and corporeal son, and unity and trinity, and mystery and distinction of persons; they say that “The replies of Servetus” to a doctrine which they understood so well and could so lucidly explain, “have nothing in them but extreme impudence and cursed reproaches. He so often throws his favourite *mentiris* (thou liest) at Calvin—be so often reviles him with being a magician, a Simon Magus—that we grieve and blush* to repeat it,” but in what manner you may

* These sensitive innocents were much in the habit of *blushing*. Had they blushed for their own servility and intolerance they would have shown some sign, at least, that all sense of shame was not obliterated from their breast.

A lively and entertaining writer, in a note to an article entitled ‘Protestantism,’ in *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* for November, 1847, says:—“As to the strongest (viz., the most sanguinary) sentiments here ascribed to him (Calvin), it will be a sufficient evidence of my fidelity to the literal truth, if I cite three separate sentences. Writing to Farell, he says, ‘*Spero capitale saltem fore judicium.*’ Sentence of the court he *hopes* will, at any rate, reach the life of Servetus. Die he must, and die he shall. But why should he die a cruel death? ‘*Pœnæ vero atrocitatem remitti cupio.*’ To the same purpose, when writing to Sultzter, he expresses his satisfaction in being able to assure him that a principal civic officer of Geneva was, in this case, entirely upright, and animated by the most virtuous sentiments. Indeed! What an interesting character! And in what way now might this good man show this beautiful tenderness of conscience? Why, by a fixed resolve that Servetus should not in any case escape the catastrophe which I, John Calvin, am longing for, (‘*ut saltem exitum, quem optamus, non fugiat.*’) Finally, writing to the same Sultzter he remarks that—when we see the Papists such avenging champions of

use a coercive power upon this man, we leave to your judgment to determine. * * We are of opinion that we ought to use all our faith and diligence in opposition to this man, especially since our churches are evil spoken of abroad, as if they were heretical and favoured heretics. The holy providence of God, therefore, has put an opportunity into your hands of purging yourselves, together with us, from the vile suspicion of so great an evil, viz., if ye shall take effectual care to put a stop to the growing contagion of this person, which we doubt not but you will do to all intents and purposes."

They conclude by an apology for detaining the express three whole days, because they could not sooner fabricate this scandalous document.* Had they "grieved and blushed" for their own pusillanimity, and shown that they had some sense of justice by protesting against the foul wrongs done to Servetus, they would have acted more becomingly. If they feared the charge of heresy, wherefore did they separate from Rome? With what face would they have dared to protest against the right of the Inquisition to make a grand *auto-da-fe* of one and all of themselves, should they ever be stolen, or surprised and placed at the mercy of that damnable tribunal?

The magistrates and divines of Schaffhausen and of Basil express themselves in a somewhat similar style. The latter speak of Servetus as holding all kinds of heresy — as of Arius, Marcion, Sabellius, Photinus, Manichæus, Pelagius, and others. Like an irritated serpent he sends forth his railing and reproachful hisses against Calvin, the servant of God, with blasphemies against the Lord; and now, slippery, as he is always, hopes to escape. They advise that all diligence should

their own superstitious fables as not to falter in shedding innocent blood, 'pudeat Christianos magistratus (as if the Roman Catholic magistrates were not Christians) in tuenda certa veritate nihil prorsus habere animi.' Christian magistrates ought to be ashamed of themselves for manifesting no energy at all in the vindication of truth undeniable; yet really since these magistrates had at that time the full design, which design not many days after they executed, of maintaining truth by fire and faggot, one does not see the eall upon them for blushes so very deep as Calvin requires. Hands so crimson with blood might compensate the absence of crimson cheeks."

* A translation of the whole letter may be seen in Wright.

be employed to cure him of his errors—but, if he should prove incurable, and persist in his perversity, they should take due care, as their office required, and as such power was given them by the Lord, that he should no longer do any injury to the Church of Christ, and prove no more dangerous to its interests in the latter end than in the beginning.

The ministers of Schaffhausen deemed it unnecessary to give a long reply. They write in flattering terms of the singular diligence of their dear brother, John Calvin, and their other fellow-labourers. As their brethren in the Lord, the Antistites (high-priests) of Zurich had expressed their opinion, they should be content to remain silent. Notwithstanding as their Excellencies of Geneva wished to know their opinion also, they had run over the books of Servetus which they found crammed with blasphemies against the Trinity—which blasphemies with his heresies they condemn, and doubt not that their Excellencies, with their distinguished prudence, will take care to suppress, that they may no longer prey on the members of Christ. To overthrow his errors by long discussions, what would it be but to act insanely with the insane? *Quid aliud esset, quam cum insaniente insanire?—October 6.*

These heretical reformers seem to be terribly afraid of being charged with the sin of which they were most notoriously guilty. Did they imagine that by accusing another of heresy they could throw the accusation off themselves? Strange notions had they of the glory of God—and that the honour due to the divine name was to be maintained and promoted by making a holocaust of any member of God's intelligent offspring. It is clear, from their own declarations, that the opinion of the world, mixed up with an idea of their own infallibility, and not the precepts of Christianity, was the rule of their conduct. Bullinger and Farell, with their friend Calvin, had a much more valid claim to be considered as priests of

“Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood
Of human sacrifice”

than ministers of an all-merciful God, or disciples of him who came not to destroy men's lives but to save them.

When men begin to tamper with conscience, and to indulge wishes which the law of God condemns, they look inquiringly around to discover men like themselves for encouragement and example. If the Council of Geneva felt convinced that they were acting justly by Servetus, or if they had laws, as some affirm, which obliged them to punish heretics with death, whence the necessity of consulting the Cantons? If they had any doubt on the subject, why not give the prisoner the benefit of their doubt? They express no desire that he should either be acquitted or converted, and if their proceedings did not sufficiently indicate their wishes, the attempts of Calvin to bias the minds of their pastors would have declared them still more clearly. Their real object seems to have been to obtain from the Cantons such acquiescence or approval of their meditated crime, as would prevent them from accusing the Genevese as its only perpetrators. The guilt that is shared with many seems less flagrant than when it is chargeable only on an individual.

When Henry VIII. of England was iniquitously determined on divorcing his wife, Catharine of Arragon, with whom, as his lawful spouse, he had cohabited for twenty years, he pretended that it was from a scruple of conscience, and felt anxious to be abetted in his nefarious project by the opinions given in his behalf, of the principal universities of Europe. He wished to have a sanction from the world, for an impiety which could find no sanction in his own breast. So Calvin would have rejoiced to have it believed by the world that the sentence of death passed on Servetus was suggested by the Helvetic States and justified by their unanimous approval. Beza, indeed, has not scrupled to say that he was condemned *ex omnium etiam Helveticarum ecclesiarum sententia*, according to the judgment of all the churches of Switzerland.* There is some difference however, between

* Candidus, in the *Monthly Repository* for 1810, p. 383, affirms it to be far from true "that all the Helvetic divines, explicitly, did condemn

the condemnation of certain doctrinal opinions, and the infliction of a sentence of death on the man who holds them. Had the churches acted as became their professions they would have taken another "doctor of the law" for their counsellor, instead of Calvin, and said; "Refrain from this man, and let him alone: for if this heresy of his be unfounded, it will come to nought—if based upon truth, ye cannot overthrow it."

Meanwhile Servetus was languishing in prison; and no attention having been paid to his petitions and remonstrances, he again addressed the Council in the following terms:—

"MAGNIFICENT LORDS,

"'Tis now three weeks since I desired to have a hearing, but could not obtain it. I beseech you, for Jesus Christ's sake, not to deny me what you would not deny a *Turk*, when I desire you to do me justice. I have several things to tell you that are very very important and necessary.

"As for the orders you gave, that something should be done to keep me clean, they have not been performed; and I am more miserable than ever. Besides, I am very much troubled with cold, by reason of my cholic and rupture, which occasions some other miseries that I am ashamed to write. 'Tis a great piece of cruelty, that I should not be allowed to speak in order to supply my wants. For God's sake, my Lords, give some orders about it, either out of compassion or out of duty.—*October 10, 1553.*

"MICHAEL SERVETUS."

On the receipt of this letter, the Council resolved that some of their members should visit the prisoner, and that such articles of apparel as he required should be provided

Servetus to death; and more so that the Senate of Geneva was exhorted by them unanimously, to inflict upon him a capital punishment. An attentive perusal of *J. Haller's Ephemerides*, an eminently pious minister of Bern, at that period, will evince that I have not misrepresented the sentiments of the Helvetic churches. He calls Servetus a blasphemer of the holy trinity. They did not, however, *openly* consent to his death, which punishment (*viricomburium, man-burning*) though he did deserve it, gave to many a handle to disapprove it, while others defended it *as well done*. Others thought that such an example ought not to have been established in the church, while more occasion would be given to the Papists to prosecute the faithful with fire; while the ancients were of opinion that *heretics ought to be overcome by the Word of the Lord, not by punishments.*"

for him. Accordingly the Lord Syndic, Darlod, and the Secretary of State, Claude Roset, executed this commission; but it does not appear that any thing of importance was communicated at the interview. Servetus might have hoped to excite their compassion, and by their influence produce a favourable result to his trial. But whatever were his hopes or his wishes he was disappointed in them all.

At the head of the republic was Amied Perrin, chief Syndic and Captain General—"a position," says Rilliet, "which fortune, alliances, popularity and talent secured to Perrin, and which seemed to demand the support of Calvin as its complement and guarantee." In Calvin he had sought and hoped to find an ally and coadjutor, not a rival and usurper. Perrin, in common with the citizens of Geneva, could not relish the austere innovations of the Reformer which threatened to annihilate all the amenities of life, and substitute in their place a system of espionage and inquisitorial interference with family affairs and domestic arrangements—and a code of "ecclesiastical laws designed to regulate *even in the smallest details* the creed and conduct of the citizens."*

What man of spirit would submit to such tyranny as this, though proceeding from a proud prelate, a lordly priest, or triple-crowned Pontiff, and not from a fierce and sour presbyterian like Calvin? His austerity incensed some of the first families of Geneva against him. He established a consistorial jurisdiction with power to exercise canonical censure and punishments even to excommunication. This displeased a great many who urged that it was a means to restore the Roman tyranny; however the thing was executed. (*Bayle*, p. 817.) Tweedie says, that Calvin "was willing

* *Seire volunt secreta domus, et inde timeri.—Juv.*

"A Genevese Clergyman—from the earliest moment of his receiving instruction to the day of his ordination; and again, should he remain in his native town, from that time to his appointment to his living, nay, even then, to the latest period of his life—lives under the most vigilant and rigorous *surveillance* of the body to which he belongs; and knows to a certainty, that *not a single act either of his public or private life passes unobserved or uncontrolled by the tribunal of his peers.*"—*Preface by the Rev. J. S. Pons, to Sermons by Divines of Geneva.—London, 1825, p. xxv.*

to contend to the death that the civil cannot sinlessly trench upon the spiritual," and he should have added—but that the spiritual should trench upon the civil, till it had got possession of the whole. This was the end and aim of the great Reformer.

Political interests had exercised no small influence in promoting the Reformation among the citizens of Geneva. They felt that the religion of Rome was a great obstacle to the attainment of that liberty which they prized; and, when they shook off the yoke of Popery, they had no idea of taking up another which, under the stern discipline of Calvin, they soon found to be more grievous. They had hoped that the Reformation would bring them spiritual liberty and independence, till the savage Institutions of Calvin showed them their mistake. Christ taught his disciples, that his yoke was easy and his burden light;—that of Calvin was too heavy and galling to be endured by any man who had not the soul of a slave.

Perrin had experienced some of those vicissitudes of influence and popularity which are by no means unusual in democratic governments. He had incurred the enmity of Calvin, and for some cause, probably political, had been deposed from his office in 1546, imprisoned, and condemned to carry a burning torch at noon through the city. Notwithstanding this, he was restored to his honours in 1548, and at length obtained the principal dignity of the state, being appointed chief Syndic. He had committed the unpardonable offence of reproaching Calvin with having taught erroneous doctrine for seven years. He now espoused the cause of Servetus, and the eagerness with which the Frenchman sought the destruction of the Spaniard induced Perrin, independently of better motives, to do what was possible for his preservation. Finding, however, that a sense of justice and the claims of mercy were feeble against the dogged intolerance and personal animosity of Calvin, he at last withdrew from the Council, pretending to be sick, and declaring that he would not be a participator in the crime of shedding innocent blood. After a lapse of three days he

returned to the Council, having in the interval determined, as the last resource, to propose that the final judgment should be referred to the Supreme Court of Two Hundred.

For this proposal he incurred the keen reprehension of Calvin, who states in a letter to Farell, that Cæsar Comicus, his nickname for Perin, after pretending sickness for three days, at length went to the Senate house to have the wicked wretch (*sceleratum*) acquitted—and that he did not *blush* to propose that the decision of the cause should be referred to the Council of Two Hundred—but that, beyond all controversy, he was already condemned.* We have endeavoured, he adds, to commute the manner of death, but in vain. I will tell you why when we meet.

But wherefore did he desire that the manner of putting a heretic to death should be changed or the cruelty of the punishment lessened? Not, it has been said, from any feeling of lenity, but because burning was the mode practised by the Church from which he had apostatized; and though this mode was the most orthodox, he would prefer another bearing less resemblance to a Spanish *auto-da-fe* and prove that there was some little difference between a Roman and a Genevese court of Inquisition.

In the discussion which ensued on receipt of the letters from the Cantons, various opinions were expressed by the Syndics and the divines as to the punishment that should be inflicted on the prisoner. Some proposed that he should be punished with exile, others with perpetual imprisonment, but by no means should he be burned. The majority, however, were of opinion that, unless he recanted, burning was the proper penalty. Among the former was one man, Borrhaus Cellarius, a professor of theology, who, having some sense of justice, declared that he could never agree that sentence of death should be pronounced on any heretic.†

* “Cæsar Comicus, simulato per triduum morbo, in Curiam tandem ascendit, ut sceleratum istum penâ eximeret. Neque enim erubuit petere, ut eognitio ad Ducentos veniret; sine controversiâ tamen damnatus est.”
—*Epist. ad Farell.* Oct. 26, 1553

† *Allwoerden*, p. 84.

The report of these proceedings spread rapidly abroad, in some—particularly in the enemies of the Reformation—exciting joy, *mala gaudia mentis*; in others—the friends of justice and humanity—grief and commiseration. David Georgius, a well-known fanatic, as he was called—*notissimus ille fanaticus*—wrote letters to the Senate of Geneva and the Helvetic cities in behalf of Servetus, whom he describes as a good and pious man who was betrayed through the hatred and envy of his enemies. Surely there was nothing fanatical in the interest which he thus manifested for a suffering and injured fellow-creature.*

When Calvin heard that many, not only Protestants but Papists, felt scandalized by the cruel persecution and death of Servetus, he and his friends took pains to make it appear that it was by the sanction and advice of the Cantons that the sentence was pronounced and carried into effect; and that the Genevese acted only in compliance with the wishes of Zurich, Berne, Basil, and Schaffhausen. Bolsec affirms that such a statement is proved to be manifestly false by the testimony of Calvin himself, who says of the magistrates of Zurich that they said, not that Servetus should be put to death, but that it was incumbent on the Genevese authorities to consider how they could most effectually correct and restrain his temerity. As he who robs a man, and also murders him to prevent discovery, in the persuasion that dead men tell no tales—so Calvin thought that the most effectual mode of coercing his temerity was to kill him. Certain it is the Cantons say nothing about burning; and, as Allwoerden testifies, an ocular inspection of their letters will show that none of them expressly declares that they either thought or wished that Servetus might be executed.†

* This letter, consisting of nearly seven pages quarto in German, may be seen in *Allwoerden*, pp. 87—93.

† Nullam, tamen, mortis mentionem injiciebant.

“Calvinus persuasum esse voluit aliis nec non amici ejus, has omnes ecclesias de morte Serveti secum sensisse; verum ocularis literarum inspectio docet, nullam earum expresse dixisse aut voluisse, ut capite damnaretur Servetus. Contrarium potius ex Bolseco atque *Historia Serveti* MSta de harum Eeclesiarum et præsertim Tigurinæ sententia constat.”—*Allwoerden*, pp. 99, 100.

It must, notwithstanding, be admitted that they gave too much reason for Calvin to infer, that they were prepared to coincide with him in any sentence which he should propose. He did not conceal his wish that the punishment should be capital,* nor do they express any wish to the contrary. They all condemn the heresies of Servetus, and say that rigorous measures should be adopted to prevent them from spreading. Bullinger speaks of prosecuting heretics with the sword of justice, and Farell that he deserved ten thousand deaths; and the rest did not venture to dissent from the judgment of their Pontiff. When the murder was perpetrated and the indignation of Christian men burst out, it was a politic device, worthy of Calvin, and characteristic of the genius that fathered his own heresies on his confiding and unsuspecting friend, Nicolas Cop, to throw the blame off himself, and fasten it on the shoulders of his neighbours—a device to which his followers to this day have recourse in trying to make the world believe that their high-priest had no hand in producing the final catastrophe, though he was unquestionably the prime mover, and chief actor in the whole affair from beginning to end.

Though Bolsee condemned the heresies of Servetus as strongly as Calvin himself, he thought it but an act of justice to vindicate the Cantons from the iniquity which Calvin wished to transfer with all the odium and reprehension attached to it, from himself to them. I have judged it proper, says he, for the cause of the church, to expose the craft of Satan, and show how he can deceive the simple, the ignorant, and the credulous, by

* Calvin, as has been noticed, said he wished the atrocity of the punishment to be lessened, (*see* p. 122, *note*.) “The common cant,” as Dr. Benson observes, “of all persecutors. The history of English persecutions gives us an example of precisely similar hypocrisy. In 1533, *Frith*, a young man greatly famed for his learning, a follower of Zuinglius, and the first in England who wrote against the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist, was tried before the Bishops *Stokesly*, *Gardiner*, and *Longland*, for the heresy of not believing in purgatory and transubstantiation. He was found guilty, and condemned, of course. *Stokesly*, on handing him over to the secular arm to be burned, prayed that his punishment might be moderated, (*pœna atrocitatem remitti cupio*—the very expression of Calvin,) not too rigorous, nor yet too gentle. *Stokesly*'s obtestation by the bowels of Christ, was considered as mockery, as every one knew that he intended *Frith* should be buried.—*Lockman's History of Persecutions*.

raising up an accomplished cheat, (*præstigiatores*—Calvin), a man superlatively villanous (*improbissimum*), most cruel, and greedy of revenge, whom he has so arrayed, so extolled, and adorned with specious epithets, as to make him appear the most benignant, the most clement of mortals, and the most facile in forgiving injuries.*

The answers of the Cantons being received, and the examinations concluded on the 26th of October, the Council was solemnly convened to come to a final decision. Rilliet says, there is reason to suppose that the most strenuous opponents of Calvin, with the exception of Perrin, were not present, whilst *not a Calvinistic councillor was absent*. Perrin, steady to the cause of justice and mercy, made a last effort for Servetus, by affirming that he should be declared innocent and discharged; and this failing, he proposed that the case should be referred to the Council of Two Hundred; and this also being opposed by the majority, they at length decided that he should be burned alive, and the sentence carried into execution on the following day.

Of this sentence Rilliet says, “viewed by our consciences, this sentence is *odious*—it was JUST according to *law*.” Odious! And is this the most proper term of disapprobation which Rilliet could find at the bar of conscience? It was execrable and diabolical in the sight of God and of every Christian man. Just according to law!—What law can make that just which violates every dictate of justice natural and revealed?—

* “Qui hunc librum (Calvini) de Serveti morte et erroribus evolvit, et diligenter, quas producit, Tigurensium contra Servetum literas examinet, nihil in eis reperiet gravius, neque quod de ejus nece dietum videri posset, quam hoc tantummodo, quod sequitur: *Vestrum sit videre, quomodo temeritatem hujus hominis coerceatis*. An hic ulla mortis sententia?—Non hæc ideo scribo, quod cædem turpissimi monstruosissimi hæretici, qualis Servetus fuit, improbem. Is enim omnium, quotquot vivunt, pessimus fuit, et indignus plane, qui in hominum societate versaretur, estque hoc mihi in votis quam maxime ut quotquot ejus sunt exterminatos, Ecclesiamque viperis pestibusque hujusmodi purgatam videre possimus. Sed hujus rei causa hoc urgendum putavi, ut Satanæ astum ob oculos ponerem, qui, ut simplices, rudes, et nimium credulos decipere posset, elegantem nobis præstigiatores suseitavit, quem sic instruxit, ut hominem improbissimum alias, immanissimumque, et vindictæ cupidissimum speciosis titulis, tanquam summe benignum et clementem, et in condonandis injuriis facilem, extolleret, ornaret, fingeret.”—*Allwoerden*, p. 100, note.

By what principle of either was Servetus placed at their tribunal at all? Where was the law which the Reformers of the city of Geneva had enacted for burning heretics?—They had enacted no new law; but the old laws, as Mosheim informs us, “which had been enacted against heretics by Frederic II., and had been frequently renewed after his reign, were still in vigour at Geneva.* But what had the Reformers to do with those laws—or those laws with the Reformers—from the hour they cast down the yoke of Papal Rome? If those laws had not become virtually extinct, or been formally abrogated in Geneva by the introduction of Christianity, why were they not in full and rigorous operation against the whole people of that city who had embraced the heretical doctrines of the Reformation? Wherefore were not the venerable company of pastors, with Calvin at their head, led forth to make a grand *auto-da-fe*? The laws should have made a great example of them, and shown, according to the advice of Farell, that they knew how to correct heresy in Geneva. But who made the ministers and Syndics of Geneva judges of heresy, and seated them in the Inquisitors’ chairs? Were they not themselves, according to an older and more potent tribunal, infected, and gangrened, and eaten, as with a cancer, to the heart’s core with heresies that required to be extirpated by fire? Had they not heard the judgment of the Parliament of Paris on Calvin’s great book which was sentenced to be burned as containing *damnable, pernicious, and heretical doctrine*? Had the sentence which was passed on Servetus been passed on Calvin, it might with some semblance of propriety be said that it was “just according to law”—for he was a citizen of Geneva, and consequently subject to its laws—but Servetus was a stranger and owed it no allegiance.

In order to show the world to whose opinions they were a little more sensitive than is becoming in orthodox christians, that they did not “deserve to be evil spoken of abroad, as if they were heretical and favoured heretics,”

* Mosheim, vol. iii. pp. 567, 568.

they should have given more ample proof than the burning of a poor individual like Servetus. If it was “a wonderful dispensation of Providence” that brought him from Arragon to a city of the Allobroges, to give the opportunity and the means of proving their orthodoxy, by burning him—how much more wonderful a providence might it have been deemed, that collected so many Reformers in one place, had they all been burned to efface the stigma of heresy with which the city was branded?

What a grand spectacle would this have been to an admiring world—Calvin with his fourteen ministers, and a select number of the Syndics, led forth in solemn procession, accoutred in the proper paraphernalia of condemned heretics, each clothed in a *sanbenito* painted with his own likeness, surrounded by dragons and devils; holding in his hand a yellow wax taper, or a green wooden cross; wearing on his heretical head the *coroza*, or pasteboard mitre, three feet high, adorned with crosses, flames, and devils with fans to raise the flames; a gag in the mouth, and a rope round the neck; their leader, by way of distinction, furnished with a long twisted tail emblematic of the distortions of his doctrines!* Had they been consumed in one huge funeral pile before the Grand Council and congregated thousands of the Swiss Cantons, and the ambassadors and deputies of foreign states—this would have been something! It would have vied with some of the magnificent *autos-da-fe* celebrated before their majesties of Spain, and have convinced the world that they knew how to correct heresy in Geneva. But the burning of one poor doctor of medicine, whom they kidnapped, afforded but a sorry exhibition—and, after all it failed in its object, for they continued to be evil spoken of, and were deemed not less heretical after than before the cool-blooded and deliberate murder.

“It is satisfactory,” says the Rev. W. K. Tweedie, “to find Calvin thus freed from charges so often brought by ignorance against him. It is manifest to every impartial inquirer, that the magistrates latterly conducted

* See *Puigblanch's Inquisition Unmasked*.

the whole affair; and, moreover, that while the laws of Geneva continued what they were, they could not do otherwise than they did, without outraging the very enactments of which they were the executive.”—p. 209.

It would have been still more satisfactory to find Calvin freed from the charges so often brought against him, not by ignorance but by the authority of facts, which his most intrepid friends and the most unscrupulous abettors of his crimes, dare not deny, that it was Calvin who betrayed Servetus,—who produced against him letters written many years before under the seal of secrecy—who imprisoned him—delivered him up to the Council—who maligned him when in prison—declaimed against him from the pulpit—drew up the charges—tried to ruin his moral character—tampered with the judges—corresponded with the ministers of the Cantons to bias their decisions—and used all the influence he possessed both at home and abroad to bring him to an unhappy end. The Rev. W. K. Tweedie might as well say it would be satisfactory to find that Judas Iscariot did not “exert his influence in the final deed,” regarding his Lord and Master. He informs us that Calvin, according to Rilliet, “was not merely not the instigator,—he was not even consulted—he was overlooked.”—All this can be predicated more satisfactorily of Iscariot, who, by the way, gave signal proofs of repentance;—Calvin gave none. The only intimation given by him that he had the heart of a human being, was his writing to Farell that he wished “the atrocity of the punishment to be mitigated.” It is also “manifest to every impartial inquirer” that not Judas, but Pilate, the high-priest and the executioners conducted the whole affair—that Judas “was not even consulted—he was overlooked.”

Calvin, it seems, wished to substitute the sword for the fire, but, as appears even from Rilliet’s statements, not from humanity, but because he wished “to avoid the use of those means which the Roman Inquisition employed against heretics and protestants, and not to recur to instruments of punishment already become odious. He wished to leave to Romanists the monopoly of the

auto-da-fe—but the magistrates did not enter into his views. * * It is to him, notwithstanding, that men have always imputed the guilt of that funeral pile, which he wished had never been reared.”

And to whom else should they impute it?

On the 26th of October Servetus was condemned to die. The process drawn up against him, which it would be superfluous to copy verbatim, was loaded with expressions of abhorrence for his heresies. It accused him of having occasioned great scandal to the churches—of having printed and distributed books full of blasphemies against the Trinity—that he called those who professed a belief in that doctrine Trinitarians, by which he meant atheists—that he affirmed Christ to be the Son of God not from all eternity, but only from his incarnation—that he held infant baptism to be a diabolical invention—that he published a book with the title of *Christianismi Restitutio*, the better to seduce and deceive ignorant people—and that he wrote a letter to one of the ministers of the city, in which he says, our gospel is without faith, and without a God—and that instead of a God we have a three-headed Cerberus. The sentence runs thus:—

“ We Syndics, judges of criminal causes in this city, having seen the process drawn up before us, at the instance of our Lieutenant against thee, Michael Servetus of Villaneuva, in the kingdom of Arragon in Spain, whereby, and also by thy voluntary confessions made in our presence, and repeated several times, and by thy books produced before us, it plainly appears to us, that thou, Servetus, hast long ago put forth a false and heretical doctrine; and that, slighting all remonstrances and reproofs, thou hast, with a malicious and wicked obstinacy, continued to spread and publish it so far as to print books against God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; in short, against the true foundation of the Christian religion, endeavouring to cause a disturbance in the church of God, whereby many souls might have been destroyed and undone (a thing horrid and dreadful, scandalous and infecting), and that thou hast not been ashamed, nor afraid of rising up against the divine Majesty and the holy Trinity, doing thy utmost endeavours to infect the world with thy heresies and offensive heretical poison. For these causes and others moving us thereunto, desiring to clear the church of God from such infection, and to cut off such a rotten member; having consulted

our citizens, and invoked the name of God to give a right judgment; sitting in the place of our ancestors, having God and his holy Scriptures before our eyes; saying, *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; by this our definite sentence, which we give in writing, we condemn thee, Michael Servetus, to be bound and carried to the place called *Champel*, and there to be fastened to a post and burnt alive with thy books, both written with thy own hand, and printed, till thy body be reduced to ashes; and thus thou shalt end thy days, to give an example to others, who would do the like. We command you, our Lieutenant, to cause our present sentence to be put in execution.”*

Allwoerden observes that in this sentence are many things calling for animadversion, which he omits for the sake of brevity. But it must not be overlooked, he says, that some of Calvin's charges are not here repeated: nothing is said of the reproaches against Moses—nothing of his denial of the soul's immortality—nothing of various other most heinous errors.—Hence he infers that if he is not mistaken, the judges thought them not sufficiently proven.†

This sentence covers the Syndics, magistrates, and ministers of Geneva with everlasting infamy. By what right did they thus presume to address Michael Servetus of Villaneuva, in the kingdom of Arragon? His very name and country show that he was no subject of theirs. By what right, then, did they seize, imprison, try, and condemn him as if he had been one of their own rebellious subjects? Had Spain been a free and enlightened kingdom, she might have asked this of them by the mouths of ten or twenty thousand armed men. But he was a heretic. What then? Who made them judges of heresy—or invested them with power to sit in judgment on those whom they stigmatized with the name of heretics? He wrote and published blasphemies against God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! False! He wrote against their absurd unscriptural

* *La Roche's Memoirs of Literature*, vol. iv. pp. 312, 313.

† *Id tamen non possumus, quin observemus, non omnia hic exprobari, quorum a Calvino postulatus fuit. Nihil hic de injuriis in Mosen, nihil de negata animæ immortalitate, nihil de atrocissimis aliis erroribus. Fallor, aut hinc intelligitur, existimasse judices, hæc not satis probata esse a Calvino.*—*Alwoerd.* p. 112.

notions. For God he had the highest veneration, and in the interpretation of scripture exercised the same right of individual judgment, which led them to shake off the yoke of Rome. By what principle of justice did they assume a liberty which they denied to others? Farell thought it but suitable to inflict on another the same punishment which he would have inflicted on himself. Wherefore, then, not grant to others the same right and freedom to interpret the Scriptures and draw their own conclusions as they had for themselves obtained and exercised? Where did they learn that it was a duty to act in violation of one of the great commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets? Grant that Servetus did put forth false and heretical doctrine, who made them the judges? The greater the falsehood, the more flagrant the heresy, the more easily could they be detected and refuted—the less capable were they of doing harm. If let alone they would soon perish by their own weakness. But where were the learned Scribes and Pharisees of Geneva—their godly divines—their magniloquent orators—their seraphic doctors—their belligerent polemics armed with the sword of the spirit who had waged successful war with the Roman hierarchy, and the satanic hosts—where were they, or how were they so paralyzed that they could not write and preach down a man of Arragon? They had the holy Scriptures before their eyes. Indeed! Then they must have spelled them backwards, and tried how far it was possible to act in opposition to their merciful dictates. Not without reason had their prisoner reproached his adversaries for not bringing proofs from Scripture. What example or precept could they find in the volume which they pretended to understand better than all the world beside, to justify the burning of those whom they called heretics? Did the potent, grave, and reverend Syndics of Geneva find their sentence authorised by the Apostle Paul, who says, that his authority was given him for the edification of the brethren, not for their destruction? (2 *Cor.* x. 8.) Had they the holy Scriptures before their eyes enjoining them to do justly and to love mercy,

when they kidnapped a wayfaring man who had done them no wrong and given them no offence—when they robbed him of all his property, cast him into a loathsome prison, and when labouring under painful bodily ailments, refused every petition to do aught that could alleviate his suffering? Was it from the parable of “The Good Samaritan” they learned to act thus? Being a stranger, ignorant of their laws and customs, unable to speak their language with fluency, he asked for counsel to assist him in pleading his cause. Had they the holy Scriptures before their eyes when they refused this humble and reasonable request? Was their case so desperate that they dared not trust him with counsel even at their own tribunal, lest by some chance their victim might escape? They say they invoked God to assist them to give a right judgment. No doubt they were guilty of that solemn mockery. They say also that they were sitting in the place of their ancestors. Yes—of those ancestors who, long prior to the introduction of christianity, lived in servile subjection to sacerdotal tyranny, delighting in Druidical superstitions, and the sacrifice of human victims. We thought they were a new race, and sat in seats of a new construction—that they were Reformers—the great benefactors of mankind, who led the van in the march of improvement—the renovators of gospel truth—the restorers of primitive christianity—the destroyers of the mystic Babylon—the liberators from Popish thralldom—the heaven-taught apostles of a new glorious dispensation—the creators of a new moral world—the heralds of a golden age, when the leopard should lie down with the kid, and every man should sit down rejoicing under his own vine and his own fig-tree—but instead of all this what do we find in them but a horde of Inquisitors—dark and ruthless as any that were ever enrolled under the blood-smearred banners of Saint Dominic?

The defenders of Calvin speak of the old laws of Geneva being still in force. But had not the supreme council of the nation the power of abrogating those laws? Why did they not act in the spirit of their boasted Refor-

mation, and not by the letter of sanguinary statutes? What was the Reformation worth, if it left the very worst parts of the old system unreformed? But we may cease to wonder at this when we consider how, in our own more enlightened times, certain statutes which had become obsolete, and which were actually annulled, being found by some of Calvin's tribe to be only prospective and not retrospective, were brought into operation to rob Unitarians of their houses of worship, and all their congregational property; a spoliation which would have been completed, had not a wise and just legislature interposed, and by passing the Dissenters' Chapel-Bill, rescued them out of their persecutor's rapacious grasp. What was the Reformation worth, if the very worst parts of the system to be overthrown were retained? What avails it to lop away a few leaves and branches, if the gnarled and unwedgeable trunk of the poison-tree is still left to germinate and distil its deadly venom?

CHAPTER IX.

Servetus informed of his condemnation.—His feelings of surprise and horror.—Farell comes to attend the execution.—Calvin exults in the fate of his adversary whom he foully misrepresents.—Servetus firmly adheres to his doctrinal opinions.—Interview with Calvin, who tries to justify his conduct.—Taken from Prison to the Tribunal.—Hears his sentence read.—Begs that its severity may be mitigated.—His last discourse.—Led to the place of punishment.—Burned.

ON the morning of the 27th of October, 1553, the herald of death waited on Servetus in prison, to inform him that by the decree of the Senate, he would, in the course of a few hours, be led to the stake and burned. He had probably indulged the hope that he would be dismissed free, and had not once admitted the possibility that the Genevese would emulate the cruelty and injustice of the Inquisitors of Vienne. What, then, we may imagine, was his horror on being told the merciless sentence, by which he was doomed to die. He was at

this time, as we may well conceive, weakened both in body and mind by long confinement, by cruel treatment, by tedious and harrassing examinations, and by the diseases which had made ruinous inroads on his constitution. He had no friend by his side to soothe his wounded spirit by sympathy, or whisper in his ear a word of christian hope or consolation.

Farell having been informed by Calvin of the day appointed for the execution, arrived in Geneva the preceding evening, and on the ensuing morning was with the prisoner when the sentence was announced. The conduct of Servetus on that trying occasion is variously described. Calvin, whose object is continually to misrepresent him, was most anxious to take away all appearance of his victim suffering as a martyr; and to strip him of every virtue tending to produce commiseration for his unhappy fate. Dr. Thomas Rees says truly,* that "it is impossible to view without feelings of disgust mingled with deep concern, the manner in which Calvin acted during the whole of these iniquitous proceedings, and particularly to observe the savage tone of exultation with which, immediately after his conviction, he stated to a friend the effects produced upon his victim by the communication of his sentence. 'But lest idle scoundrels should glory in the insane obstinacy of the man, as in a martyrdom, there appeared in his death a beastly stupidity; whence it might be concluded that, on the subject of religion, he never was in earnest. When the sentence of death had been passed upon him he stood fixed; now as one astounded; now he sighed deeply; and now he howled like a maniac, and at length he just gained strength enough to bellow out after the Spanish manner, *misericordia! misericordia!*'"†

This inhuman description given us by Calvin, was

* *Historical Introduction to the Racovian Catechism*, p. xiv.

† *Ceterum ne male feriat nebulones vecordi homiuis pervicacia quasi martyrio gloriantur: in ejus morte apparuit belluina stupiditas, unde judicium facere liceret, nihil unquam serio in religione ipsum egisse. Ex quo mors ei denunciata est, nunc attonito similis hærere, nunc alta suspiria edere, nunc instar lymphatici ejulare. Quod postremum tandem sic invaluit ut tantum Hispanico more reboaret, Misericordia! Misericordia! CALVINI Opusc. Ed. Genev. 1667. ALLWOERDEN, note, p. 113.*

written for the avowed purpose, as it informs us, of preventing "idle scoundrels from glorying in the obstinacy of the man as in a martyrdom." Whether those whom he designated by his abusive epithet of "idle scoundrels" would take any concern in the matter we need not inquire—but this we know, that many men of the greatest piety, integrity, and worth did, and do, regard the death of Servetus as a martyrdom. If any man ever died as a martyr to what he believed to be the truth, it was Servetus. That after a vexatious and harrassing trial in which he had no chance of justice, and a tedious confinement in prison, while labouring under a complication of diseases—without friend—without counsel—without the common necessaries of life, he should at the last dread hour betray some symptoms of human weakness, is only what might be expected. That on hearing pronounced against him a sentence, one of the most barbarous and unjust upon record, he should stand confounded and amazed—paralyzed both in body and mind—is not surprising. He was a suffering man and not a suffering God. But this state of profound and speechless woe his persecutor calls "bestial stupidity," and from it he says "it might be concluded that on the subject of religion he never was in earnest." This is like some other inferences of Calvin and his school, in which there is not the slightest connexion between the premises and the conclusion. With more reason should it be concluded, that had he not been earnest in religion, even unto death, and in defiance of all opposition, he would not have been in that unhappy condition. What conclusion would Calvin draw when reading of one who was "led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth"? This he would designate by epithets not to be repeated. Servetus "stood fixed, now as one astounded." Just so—he was astounded, as he well might—the shock was tremendous—and in recovering from it "he sighed deeply; and now he howled like a maniac." This is not very consistent with what follows; but we are not to expect consistency from such a reporter; his howling

like a maniac would indicate that he had an almost supernatural strength; and yet it is added, that "at length he just gained strength enough to bellow out after the Spanish manner, *misericordia! misericordia!*"* "This description is altogether worthy of its author—savage, barbarous, and false—intended to blast the fair fame of his victim and rob him of his crown of martyrdom. Other witnesses, on whom we may better depend, inform us, that Servetus bore his fate at this trying season with great firmness and serenity—disturbed indeed, occasionally, by the view of the terrific apparatus which was preparing for his execution. He never wavered in his religious faith. When exhorted on the last morning by Farell, the minister of Neuchâtel, and the friend of Calvin, who was appointed to attend him,† to return to the doctrine of the Trinity, he calmly requested his monitor to convince him, by one plain passage of Scripture, that Christ was called the Son of God before his birth of Mary."

Two hours before Servetus was led to the stake, Farell proposed that there should be an interview between him and Calvin, probably with the hope that he might be induced to retract some of the opinions for which he was condemned. To this proposal Servetus assented, and Calvin, as he himself informs us, accompanied by two magistrates came to the prison;—but it does not appear that they came with any promise that his sentence should be mitigated if he would recant, and if they thought that now, at the last hour, he would confess that he had been in fatal error all along, they

* The bravest man may express surprise and alarm, without any imputation on his courage, on being unexpectedly told to prepare for death. Even soldiers, familiar with fields of carnage, show symptoms of terror when doomed to be shot in cool blood. Thus, O'Doyle, a general of division in the army of the Christinos of Spain, when taken prisoner by Zumalacarrégui, on hearing that he must die by the same death which he had repeatedly seen inflicted on others, clasped his hands, and in the "Spanish manner," cried out *La Vida! por Dios! por Dios!*

† "It was judged proper," says the *Christian Reformer*, "that in this Protestant *auto-da-fe* the example of the holy office should be followed, as well in the attendant of the victim as in the mode of his immolation. By Calvin's appointment, the office of Protestant Confessor was assigned to Farell, the man who had pleaded for his death, and whose zeal for orthodoxy was in no danger of being repressed by any emotions of pity or compassion."

were disappointed. Servetus, with death before his eyes, entertained no such idea; but wishing not to go to his final account without obeying the scriptural injunction to be reconciled to his enemy while he was yet in the way with him; he asked pardon—pardon it must have been for any harsh and injurious expressions employed by him in the course of his controversy—a circumstance which reflects honour on the memory of the martyr. On this, says Calvin, I ingenuously confessed that I never persecuted him on account of any private injuries, but with all the mildness I possessed* admonished him; and, for the space of sixteen years, laboured, at the peril of my life, to cure his insanity—that I calmly corresponded with him by private letters, without courting publicity, and omitted no act of kindness until he became exasperated, by the freedom of my remonstrances, and discharged on me the effusions of his bile, or rather of his fury.† But interrupting my discourse, (probably by continuing to ask forgiveness), I desired him to beg forgiveness of the eternal God for endeavouring to blot three hypostases out of his essence, and for the blasphemous epithets which he had applied to him, saying, that if there was any real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, he must be a three-headed Cerberus.‡

* Calvin may have been guilty of no great violation of truth in affirming that he admonished Servetus with all the mildness he possessed, for, in fact, mildness was a virtue to which he could never make the slightest pretension. "His adversaries," says D'Israeli, "are never others than knaves, heretics, drunkards, and assassins. Sometimes they are characterized by the familiar appellatives of bulls, asses, cats, and hogs, (and obscene dogs). By him Catholic and Lutheran are alike hated, yet, after having given vent to this virulent humour, he frequently boasts of his mildness. When he reads over his writings, he tells us that he is astonished at his forbearance, but this, he adds, is the duty of every Christian! at the same time he generally finishes a period thus:—do you hear, you dog? do you hear, madman?"—*Curiosities of Literature*, vol. i. p. 17.

† Much irritating language had been employed by both parties, but the palm of vituperation must be awarded to Calvin. Servetus, no doubt, provoked him by the repeated use of the uncourtly expression *Thou liest*. Spon, in his history of Geneva, says, he calls Calvin a liar above fifty times in one discourse! But Calvin repaid the insult by torrents of abuse—even in his comments on the Bible—a place which should not have been desecrated by making it the vehicle of personal reviling.

‡ "The reader will be at no loss to estimate the *friendly feelings* and the *christian mildness* with which Calvin had acted towards Servetus, for sixteen years, in order to reclaim him—first denouncing him to the Inquisitor

When I found my admonitions to avail nothing, I was unwilling to be wise beyond the rule of my master, and so, in obedience to the precept of Paul, I withdrew from the heretic, condemned as he was by his own conscience.*

From what follows, it seems that Servetus, though on the point of death, so far from yielding to his antagonist, wished to force him to discuss the question at issue; for Calvin in continuance, says, I refrained from entering into any discussion, lest the malevolent might accuse me of being too pugnacious; but, now that Servetus is dead, the spreading of his opinions must by all means be prevented.

Had Calvin acted as much like a Christian as Servetus, he would, on bended knee, have asked forgiveness of Servetus for having brought him to an end so cruel, and instead of uttering such theological jargon, as “attempting to blot three hypostases from the essence of the eternal God,” he would have asked pardon of God for presuming to speak of him in language unknown to holy writ. What did Calvin or any one else know of hypostases and essence of the Supreme Being? By such terms as these are the simple mystified. Thus are the ignorant deluded by words without knowledge.

Had the time and circumstances permitted, Servetus might, with more propriety have admonished his monitor to ask pardon for having had the impiety to ascribe to the greatest, wisest, best of Beings, a decree so atrocious that Calvin himself called it *horrible*, and for the various antichristian doctrines of his Institution, condemned as it was by the Parliament of Paris for containing *damnable, pernicious, and heretical* dogmas. Had the long-established ecclesiastical authorities of Christendom sat in judgment on Calvin, he would have been pronounced as incorrigible and dangerous a heretic as his victim. But how did he know that Servetus was convicted by his

of Vienne; then consigning him to a loathsome prison in Geneva; harassing him with a vexatious prosecution; and, when he had procured his condemnation and failed to shake his faith, delivering him over to Satan.”—*Christian Reformer*, Jan. 1847, p. 20.

* He here alludes to Paul's Epistle to Titus, iii. 3.—“A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”

own conscience? Of this there is not only no proof, but Calvin himself furnishes proof to the contrary. He says his admonitions availed nothing. They neither convinced the understanding nor shook the firmness of Servetus. He clung to his opinions till the last moment, and made no retractation. This is admitted by Rilliet (p. 212), who says, "Taught by adversity, Servetus now appeared as mild and humble towards his adversary as he had hitherto been arrogant and bold; but, though he controlled his feelings, he did not sacrifice his convictions."

Had Servetus, from the commencement of the trial, condescended to act the part of a hypocrite and sycophant to Calvin, his life would probably have been spared. Valentinus Gentilis, another heretic, being imprisoned for heresy in Geneva, in 1558, at the suit of Calvin, softened the iron heart of the Reformer by the warmth of his adulation, styling him "an excellent servant of God and a great divine." The consequence was that he was not burned, but only banished. Calvin himself made the following confession: "This I will only give my word for at present, that I was never so mortally enraged against him, but that had he not been lost to all sense, it was in his power to have saved his life by his *modesty alone*. Nor do I know what to say unless it be this, that he precipitated himself to his end, by his own fatal madness." (*Wright*, p. 144). This passage being interpreted means, that had Servetus succumbed to Calvin, had he crouched and whined at his feet like a spaniel—proved a recreant to principle—and acknowledged himself vanquished by the superior learning and argumentation of his enemy—had he tickled his vanity, and said, no uninspired man could match such a "chosen vessel" of the Lord, such a divine of "consecrated intellect," and so mighty in the Scriptures, as the thrice-illustrious and redoubtable John Calvin, his life might have been spared. But he "precipitated himself by his own fatal madness," *i. e.* he was resolute in his adherence to what he believed the truth of God, and would not purchase life by admissions which he would have considered as a

virtual denial of him who said: "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Various motives may have combined to induce Calvin to act as he did on this occasion. He had himself been not only suspected but accused of heresy, and particularly of Arianism. He objected to the term Trinity as barbarous, and gave a Unitarian interpretation to some texts of Scripture claimed by the orthodox as peculiarly their own. In a comment on the tenth chapter of the Evangelist John, he alleged that the Fathers were wrong in their explanation of the text "I and my Father are one;" and that it signified only a perfect accordance of will, and not unity of essence," (*O si sic omnia!*). To clear himself from the imputation of heresy, he found it expedient to be bitter against heretics; just as in our own times those who are suspected of heterodoxy sometimes become more outrageously orthodox than they who are above all suspicion. Moreover, in his controversy, with Servetus, he was mortified not a little, as Maimbourg informs us, at finding his own arguments turned against himself. Calvin, in his opposition to Rome, would allow of no authority but Scripture, and Servetus, in opposition to Calvin, would allow no other. Who, then, was to decide between them? Scripture is held forth as indispensable and omnipotent when it supports any favourite or popular dogmas, but when it is arrayed against them, it is set aside as valueless, or wrested into meanings altogether adverse to its genuine dictates.

It is observed by Dr. Thomas Rees, that "various attempts have been made by the apologists of the Reformer to remove from him the foul stigma of being the author of his adversary's arrest; but, in truth, Calvin himself never denied or disguised the fact. On the contrary, he expressly avows it in more than one of his printed works, and takes credit to himself for having thus acted towards a man whose principles he held in abhorrence, and whom, on more than one occasion, he thought fit to brand with the opprobrious epithet of Dog."

The same writer observes that Servetus repelled the

whole of the charges against him with great firmness, and openly avowed himself the author of the writings that were stated to contain the heretical opinions for which he was arraigned.*

As time drew near to 11 o'clock, the Lord Lieutenant, accompanied by the Secretary of Justice, entered the prison, and addressed Servetus in the customary form, "Come with me and hear the good pleasure of the Lords," he was then led to the tribunal at the gate of the Town-house, from the balcony of which Dalrod, the Syndic, read to criminals their fatal sentence.

Servetus, on hearing the sentence read, would have been more or less than man had he betrayed no emotion. Struck with horror at the cruel punishment to which he was doomed, he besought the judges to change it to another less painful. He said that if he erred it was through ignorance, for that it was always his desire to follow Scripture. Farell then said, that "To obtain mercy he must confess his fault and testify his horror at it. Servetus refused that confession, repeating that he had not merited death, and that he prayed God to pardon his accusers."—*Rilliet*, p. 219.

Suppose he had confessed, or recanted, and contrary to the convictions of his own mind, declared that he had all along been guilty of pernicious and damnable errors, and would now embrace the soul-saving doctrines of Calvin, would he have obtained mercy? Was Farell authorized to make any such promise? Had Calvin told him that it was not yet too late to repent and be converted? Does the tiger draw in his retractile claws when once they are fastened in the body of his prey to let it escape? or the wolf spare the lamb in whose blood he has already begun to quench his thirst?

When the first emotions of Servetus, on hearing his sentence, had subsided and he became collected, he made a speech which, as Wright truly alleges, refutes the base calumnies of his enemies, that he died a blasphemer of God and his Son. What reason they had for such

* *Historical Introduction to the Racovian Catechism*, p. xiv.

false and infamous charges, may appear from a single extract.

“They who assert three individual persons or hypostases in the Godhead, do insinuate to us that there are three Gods by nature equal; for they tell us there are three substantial, distinct, and different things, and will have every one of those things, or hypostases, (as they call them) to be a God. Thus they do necessarily make three equal and distinct Gods; for, since these persons or hypostases, differing in number and in part, are, each of them, predicated of God, the consequence is plain, that there are as many predicates as subjects, and that the number of Gods must be equal to the number of persons. And although in words they tell us there is only one God, yet in effect and reality they represent three to our understanding; for every man of the least skill or ingenuity must see, that three are proposed to him as the objects of his adoration. No man could ever yet explain or inform us how he understood that these three of which each is a God, were only one God. There remains, therefore, both on the mind and understanding, this insuperable perplexity and inexplicable confusion, that three are one, and one is three. For although the whole understanding intends, and is directed to one God, and proposeth to itself one God to be worshipped in spirit, and is thoroughly persuaded of the unity; yet immediately three distinct objects present themselves, and frequently appear to the mind, each of which it knows to be a God; and thus seeing that three equal and distinct Gods are represented to its view, it faints, being confounded between one and three; this is the issue of the *Greek Trias* or triplieity. But if, on the other hand, we are willing to try the whole matter by the word of holy Scripture, as by a touchstone, and to find out the true knowledge of God, according to the words of God himself, all confusion and perplexity will immediately vanish, and our understanding will not be obliged to admit any thing in itself contradictory.”

He then proceeds to show that though there is one superior to all, “The King of kings, and Lord of lords, of whom all are and on whom they depend, who alone is the Father and Creator of all things,” the term God may be and is understood in a subordinate sense, that it is a title that was given to Moses, and to any whom God hath adorned and exalted above others by any particular favour, virtue, or privilege. In proof and illustration of his doctrine he quotes a variety of texts from Scripture, of which he shows an intimate knowledge, and how it asserts the supremacy of the Father, and

doth always distinguish between God and the Son of God. He speaks in lofty terms of the pre-eminence to which Christ was exalted, and concludes by ascribing to him with God the Father, the most high and merciful God, praise, honour, and glory, to everlasting ages.

Rilliet says "Servetus could have escaped from the affair, at the same price (as that paid by Valentin Gentili) but he did not wish to profit by the benefits of a recantation, and preferred his convictions to his life. In this perseverance, Farell saw only a guilty obstinacy, and he was so incensed that he threatened Servetus not to follow him to the funeral pile, if he persisted in maintaining his innocence. Silence was the only reply of the condemned man, and the mournful procession began to move forward.

"The Lord Lieutenant, and the herald on horseback, both arrayed in the insignia of their office, marched before the archers who surrounded Farell and Servetus. The crowd, less numerous than that which commonly assists at such sights, swelled the escort."—*Rilliet*. pp. 219, 220.

The place of public execution was on an eminence, named Champel, about a musket-shot distant from the walls of Geneva, commanding an extensive view of one of the most lovely landscapes in nature—scenes of beauty and grandeur, now to be desecrated by one of the most unhallowed and atrocious rites ever perpetrated by the flamens of Calvinism. To this spot must ever be attached a melancholy interest—exciting the sympathies of the wise and good, and prompting an expression of thanks to heaven, that the penal fires of bigotry and superstition have, for a season at least, been extinguished. La Roche says, he had the curiosity to visit it. Though hardly known to any traveller, it is not however forgotten. In 1827, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Esq., in his journal of 209 days informs us, that he visited "a spot where the unfortunate Spanish physician, Michael Servetus, was burned alive by the stupid and bigoted magistrates of Geneva, and that celebrated Reformer, and brutal monster, John Calvin. For the

purpose of demonstrating how far the folly and wickedness of men have gone, and to deter us from being brought back to the same state of degradation, in which the human mind then was, and to which many labour most assiduously to reduce it, it would be desirable to rescue from forgetfulness the history of that transaction." While the persecuting and intolerant spirit of Calvinism exists, it will not be forgotten; nor will the mention of it cease to excite just reprobation wherever the spirit of Christianity dwells.

Accounts of the last moments of Servetus vary, as might be expected. As he was led forth he was heard to exclaim, "O God, preserve my soul! O Jesus, son of the Eternal God, have mercy on me!" When he reached the fatal spot, and saw all the apparatus of death, and its stern ministers, he fell prostrate, and for a brief space poured forth his supplications to the Father of all. While he lay in this position, Farell addressed the multitude around him, and said, "Behold what great power Satan has when he takes possession. This is a learned man, and what has befallen him may befall each of you."* This we may suppose with Allwoerden, was the subject of a more lengthened discourse; in which he expatiated on the sin of heresy, and attributed the constancy of Servetus in adhering to his principles, to the omnipotence of Satan. Indeed, no class of theologasters can boast more familiarity with the doings of Satan than the Calvinists. Strange if they could not, since they are also perfectly familiar with the "mind of God;" and may boast that they are omniscient and infallible, and can calculate to a fraction the number of the elect!

When he rose from the ground, Farell exhorted him to address the people, hoping perhaps, that he would make a public recantation, and implore forgiveness—a rather unreasonable hope of one whom he had just described as possessed by the spirit of evil. Servetus, in manifest perturbation, made no reply, but only drew deep sighs from his breast, exclaiming, O God! O God! Farell

* Videte quantas vires habeat Satan, cum aliquem possidet. Illic homo doctus est, quod idem vobis accidere possit.

urged him to declare if that was all he had to say, and Servetus replied by asking of what should he speak but of God. Farell then inquired if he had no wife, nor children, to whom he should bequeath his property, and if he wished to have the assistance of a notary. He spoke this, probably in ignorance of what had occurred at the trial—of the robbery in Geneva, and the confiscation of his property in France. After this he admonished him to ask for the prayers of the people and, according to Calvin's account, extorted compliance with much difficulty—*ægre ab eo extorsit*. This reluctance to ask for the prayers of the people, Calvin represents as a sign of beastly stupidity (*signum belluinæ stupiditatis*); at the same time he inconsistently justifies the fact that he abuses, by saying that he does not see with what conscience Servetus could request the prayers of a people, of whom he had in his writings affirmed that they had no church, no God, and who denied Christ. Servetus might have thought the same, and deemed it profanation or idolatry to address in prayer any being, but the one only, true, and living God. I know not, writes Allwoerden, how aught that a man either says or does while standing by his funeral pile, and in instant expectation of a horrible punishment, can be equitably considered as a reproach or a crime. Farell and his friends would have rejoiced to show in their lengthy prayers, on such an inviting occasion, their hatred of heresy, and their zeal in its extermination, mingled with hypocritical wishes for the conversion of a man whom they had delivered to Satan, and predestinated to be eternally damned. Their prayers, could Servetus have listened to them, would only have disturbed his own pious meditations. They would have been only a mockery and an insult. The prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. He did well, therefore, to show himself reluctant to ask for such intercessions as theirs. He had now resigned himself to his fate. He sought support and consolation from Him who alone can bestow them; and having no longer a share with affairs of this life, made no further assertion of the truth of the doctrines for which he was

about to die—a circumstance of which Calvin, always prone to vilify and misrepresent him, takes advantage to ask, who would say he died the death of a martyr, who having freedom of speech, yet declined to utter a word in defence of his doctrine when placed at the stake?—a question which only exposes the malevolence of him who asks it,* since Servetus had already declared his sentiments fully on the very morning of the day on which he died, and as the Polish knight, Lubieniecus, expresses it, poured forth his last accents like the funeral dirge of the dying swan. †

At length he was led to the fatal stake, which was fastened in the ground, and surrounded with faggots of green and leafy oak. On his head was placed a crown of straw, or of leaves, besprinkled with sulphur. His body was bound to the stake by an iron chain, his neck held by a strong rope so high that his feet just touched the ground, and to his thigh was strapped a copy of the fatal book *Christianismi Restitutio*. He entreated the executioner to give him as little pain as possible; but, as the fire was tedious in performing its office, after he had suffered for some time, one or more of the spectators, moved by compassion, supplied fresh fuel, and in the course of half-an-hour the holocaust was completed.

Thus terminated, by a horrible death, the life of Michael Servetus, in the 44th year of his age, in the Calvinistic city of Geneva, by the cruel vengeance of a man who assumed the name of a minister of the gospel, a great reformer of the corruptions, and a restorer of the doctrines of Primitive Christianity! Had he been permitted to live, he might have proved in reality, what his murderer was only in pretence—a genuine restorer of great truths that had been long lost, or forgotten and

* There are some who affirm that when Calvin saw Servetus led forth to execution, he was seen to smile, having but partially concealed his countenance under the fold of his garment.

Sunt qui affirmant Calvinum cum vidisset ad supplicium duci Servetum subrisisse, vultu subsinu vertis leviter dejecto.—*Allwoerd.* p. 160.

Such monstrous inhumanity may well be deemed incredible even of Calvin.

† Lubieniecus, in his *Historia Reformationis Polonicæ* prefaces the last-discourse of Servetus, thus, "Ei (Calvino) præponam Serveti-ipsius sermonem, ac *vultu Cycnæam vocem quam ante horrendam mortem edidit.*"—p. 98.

buried under a still accumulating mass of gloomy and barbarous superstitions.

In Allwoerden's book is an engraving of Servetus, which represents him with a grave and thoughtful aspect, large full eyes, a pointed beard and mustaches; his hair hanging down on each side of his face, terminating in a slight curl, and crisped at the top of his high and magnificent forehead, in which a phrenologist may discern a fine development of the intellectual organs. One hand rests on a clasped book, the other on his breast. In a corner of the back ground he is seen tied to the stake in the midst of rising flames, while the executioner is at work before him, with a long pole adjusting the faggots, and near him an officer, and a halberdier. *C. Fritisch, Sculpsit, Hamburgi.**

The engraving is taken from an ancient picture which had probably been painted for some friend. It came into the possession of John Crellius, and passed into that of Suerinus, then of Strengerus, next of Teuberus, and finally of Peter Adolphus de Boysen, who lent it to Allwoerden, and he informs us that there were two other likenesses of him—one the size of an octavo page, but without the name of the painter or engraver, the other engraved by Christophorus de Sichen, *Anno 1607*.

If we form our idea of Servetus from the engraving, he must have been a man of such handsome aspect, as may prompt to make a comparison between him and his destroyer, as represented in the title page of Calvin's works, printed in Amsterdam, 1667. The engraving of Calvin is in profile, with a projecting forehead, large nose, long beard, sharp, melancholic, sickly visage—and on his head a bonnet, which conceals the coronal development.

If the following description given of Calvin by Liguori may be credited, his aspect was a true index of his mind. "He was the slave of almost every vice, but especially of hatred, anger, vindictiveness, and on that account, Bucer, though his friend, says he is a mad dog, and as

* "The Arminians used the pencil of Salvator Rosa to draw this transaction."—*Monthly Rep.* 1810, p. 430.

a writer, inclined to speak badly of every one. He was very emaciated, and his colour was so bad that he appeared bronzed all over.”*

We learn from other authorities that “He was subject to *eleven* different maladies, which, continually afflicting him, irritated his dispositions. He had, indeed, so much acerbity in his temper, that he became unsupportable to those who were near him. It was that occasioned many Germans to say—‘that they would prefer being in hell with Beza, to being in paradise with Calvin.’ Every day he taught theology, preached and held various conferences; yet, in spite of all his occupations, he contrived to leave behind him, as an author, nine ponderous folios! He died at Geneva in 1564, aged 55. He was a learned man; but he has caused a world of wo. He strove ambitiously to overturn every thing. He was cruel and vindictive: he occasioned the death of M. Servetus, who was so cruelly put to death in the name of a christian religion, and by the hands of men who profess Evangelical gentleness; and all this for a difference about the trinity!”†

Beza, Bullinger, and all their fraternity seem to have had some strong suspicion that the practice of man-burning, which was reprobated in the Papists, would not escape censure when approved and practised by Calvinists. However, to prevent all commiseration for their victim, they left nothing undone to blacken and misrepresent his character. Calvin prepared the way by the descrip-

* *Liguori's History and Refutation of the various Heresies.* Dub. 1846, p. 355.

† *Curiosities of Literature*, p. 177.

Father Daniel of the Society of Jesus, after lauding the *modesty*, simplicity, and frugality of Calvin, adds, “His skill in gaining and managing men’s minds was extraordinary; and by that he seduced a great number of Catholics. He knew how to moderate his natural impetuosity and compass his designs. His private faults served only to strengthen his authority, by rendering him formidable; for he was choleric, jealous in the business of reputation, and inclined to violent measures: but he took care to colour all this over with the specious pretence of zeal for the purity of the gospel. He was sharp and biting in his writings, obstinate in his opinions; morose, especially towards the end of his life; and this gave ground to a kind of proverb which went about Geneva—*That it was better to be in hell with Beza than in paradise with Calvin.*”

“Such was the author of the subversion of religion in France.”—*Hist. of France*, vol. iii, p. 453. Lond. 1727.

tion which he gave of his conduct in the closing scene, and from the pulpit denounced the man whom he had burned on earth, to eternal torments in hell. He reprobated the idea that he died as became a martyr, and asked who will consider that such is the death of any man who, at the last moment, does not utter a syllable in defence of the opinions for which he suffers?—Had he forgotten that Servetus, on hearing his sentence read, had made a long discourse in defence of his peculiar doctrines?—that he made no retraction of the principles for which he was led to the stake,* but evinced the firmness and constancy of a genuine martyr? As such his name has been more deservedly honoured than that of many of orthodox notoriety. A writer of Calvin's school, to whom Allwoerden refers, complains that numbers of Italians held his memory in great veneration. The same writer also informs us that there is extant a French poem, celebrating his firmness and tranquillity in the last tragic act, of which the author seems to have been a witness. The whole argument of the verses is taken from the Phædo of Plato; the author transferring to Servetus what was said by Plato of Socrates.—p. 115.

Lubieniccius expresses the sentiments of real christians on this sanguinary deed. It was indeed, says he, an atrocious crime, and, in the judgment of all good men, directly contrary to the clement and humble spirit of Christ, but in perfect accordance with the disposition of those who would have drawn down *Boanergean* fire from heaven, in imitation of Elias, to destroy some inhospitable Samaritans—differing only in this, that they wished to punish the guilty, but Calvin destroyed the innocent. Well did the illustrious Grotius say, that the spirit of Antichrist had appeared at the lake of Geneva, (ad Lacum Lemanium), as well as on the banks of the Tiber.

* This is admitted by his bitterest enemies. *Nulla edito pœnitentiæ signo, infelix vivus cremaretur.—Beza in vita Calvinii.*

CHAPTER X.

Calvin blamed.—The friends of the Reformation alarmed.—Works published against his persecuting principles.—Writes in his own defence.—Feels the reproaches with which he is assailed.—The opinions of Servetus continue to spread.—Dialogues between Vaticanus and Calvinus.—Arguments against Calvin and persecution.—Rendered miserable by the reproaches of his enemies.—Censured by Grialdo and Bolsee.—The reading of his *Institution* prohibited by the Bernese.—Comforted by Melanethon.—Celebrated writers by whom he is condemned — Grotius — Voltaire — Gibbon — Roseoe — Wesley — Carmichael — Tagart.—Vain attempt to shift the crime of murdering Servetus from Calvin to the spirit of the age.—Conclusion.

THE great object for which Calvin had so strenuously laboured was attained. The battle was fought—the victory won—and he might now repose under the shade of the brimstone-spotted and fire-scorched leaves of the chaplet which had been twined for him by the hands of bigotry and persecution. But if he expected universal approbation for the part he had taken in exterminating heresy by fire and faggot, he soon began to experience what, in his wonted style, he might have called the “bestly stupidity” of the Genevese, and of many others beyond the walls of Geneva, in not showing a due sense of his great merit, nor proper gratitude in expressing their thanks. The condemnation of Servetus had been procured, not unanimously, but only by a majority composed of Calvin’s idolaters; and murmurs against the cruelty and injustice of the whole proceeding began to be heard. *Parva metu primo*. At first low and suppressed through fear, but gradually swelling into a tempest that roared fearfully in the ears of the disappointed Reformer.

The burning of a man so distinguished as Servetus, by a judicial sentence, for what Calvin and his accomplices called heresy, was enough to alarm all who took a friendly interest in the great religious movement. It inflicted an indelible stain of infamy on the cause of the Reformation—a “damned spot,” which every attempt to efface only stamps deeper and spreads more

wide. It afforded its enemies a triumph in which they did not fail to exult. It justified all the persecutions and atrocities of which the Reformers complained in the Church from which they separated. The deed was horrible: and the cold-blooded attempts made by Calvin and his abettors to palliate and defend it were equally so. Well might the friends of christian liberty and truth declare that the Reformation by Calvin was a chimæra. No reach of thought, or depth of understanding was required to discover that if he and his Consistory assumed the right of deciding on the meaning of controverted passages of Scripture, and of enforcing, by pains and penalties, the adoption of such creeds as they chose to dictate, those rights for which Protestantism contended were a mere nullity; and that it would be just as well to trust to the infallibility of the Pope as of Calvin. The Reformation required had not yet commenced. What was called such was only a rebellion against the long established authorities—an audacious attempt to erect one ecclesiastical dynasty on the ruins of another.

The heresies which Calvin had flattered himself with the hope of having uprooted, only scattered their seeds more widely. Ere the ashes of Servetus had time to cool, they began to pullulate—to strike their roots more deep, and to spread out their branches in various directions.

A controversy immediately arose concerning the right of magistrates to punish heretics. Castellio, under the assumed name of Martinus Bellius, published a treatise on this subject, denying that magistrates, by the principles of Christianity, had any such right.* Beza, who was one with Calvin in all acts of intolerance, published a treatise on the same subject, in which he maintained

* “What stung the sanguinary Beza most of all was what he called a farrago, (this or some similar production) which some, mistaking it for other treatises on the same subject, attribute to Castellio, others to Lælius Socinus, but which probably was like the famous Smectymnus, the joint work of several wise and well informed persons. Beza was offended because the authors said he had published a book to justify the murder of heretics, whereas he had only written one to prove that they ought to be put to death.”—*Robinson's Eccl. Researches*, p. 313.

the opposite opinion. But the people had learned to think differently, and their clamour against the judges became so vehement, that Colladon, one of them, translated Beza's book from the Latin into French, and printed it to pacify them.* But it seems not to have produced the intended result; for Calvin at last deemed it necessary to come forth in his own defence with what he called "A faithful Exposition of the Errors of Michael Servetus, in which the right of coercing heretics by the sword is maintained." "Each of these Reformers," says Lubieniccus, "taking a dart out of the quiver of the Church of Rome, to thrust it with a greater fury into the sides of heretics of their own making."

If Calvin was really convinced that such a right was well-founded, and that it belonged to him or his agents to exercise that right, where was the necessity of his attempting to exculpate himself, as he does, from the crime of burning his victim? In the prefatory matter of his treatise, he takes pains to inform the reader that it was not he who dictated the punishment. From the time, says he, that Servetus was convicted, I said nothing about his punishment, as not only all good men will testify, but I grant permission to the evil to produce any proof which they have to the contrary; and, admitting this, I am indifferent about any other exculpation, despising, as I do, the calumnies of the turbulent, the malignant, the foolish, and the drunken.†

But what is all this to the purpose? From the time

* "Bure, N. 957. Traité singulier et fort curieux, mis au jour a l'occasion au supplice du fameux Michel Servet. Colladon, un des Juges qui assisterent a la condamnation de cet heresiarque, entreprit la traduction de ce traité, pour laver ses confreres dans l'esprit des peuples, qui se recrierent contre l'injustice d'un pareil jugement."—*Robinson's Eccl. Researches*, p. 342.

† Wherefore should any one be anxious to defend Calvin against a charge against which he had no wish to defend himself? he has the honesty to admit the justice of an accusation which indeed it would have been the acme of impudence to deny.

"Nec sane dissimulo, mea opera consilioque jure in carcerem fuisse conjeetum. Quia recepto hujus civitatis jure, eriminis reum peragere oportuit; causam huc usque me esse prosectum fateor. Ex quo convictus est, me nullum de pœna verbum fecisse, non solum boni omnes viri mihi testes erunt, sed malis etiam concedo ut proferant si quid habent."—*Calvini opp. Tom. viii. p. 511.*

that Servetus was convicted, he said nothing about his punishment! And this is the defence which, from that day till this, his followers have set up for their master. When the conviction was secured, his interference was no longer necessary. "He was not consulted—he was overlooked." When the vile instrument has performed its office it is cast away, or laid on the shelf till its services may again be required.

We learn from himself that the acts of the magistrates did not lighten the burden of opprobrium by which he was oppressed by his enemies. Nothing, said they, could be more unbecoming than that he should have exposed Servetus to the professed foes of Christianity, as to cruel wild beasts—that it was he who betrayed him to the Inquisitors of Vienne—a charge which he vainly endeavours to refute. He candidly admits, however, that he was the cause of his apprehension in the city—that he sent out his accusers—that he dictated the process; and then he inveighs against the boasting, the ferocity, and absolute rejection of all mild counsels by Servetus, and doubts not but the Apostle Paul would have handed him over to the civil magistrate who had the glory of Christ at heart.—p. 517.

Many thought far differently. In Geneva were some minds over which the spirit of Calvin had no power—some who protested, in the name of liberty, against all persecution—some who, as Rilliet informs us, "though sincerely attached to Calvinistic doctrine, yet felt a very strong repugnance to the employment of capital punishment in matters of heresy; for it appeared to them at once dangerous and unreasonable to use the same weapons which seemed so odious when employed by Popish hands." (p. 201). It seemed, as Maimbourg states, to authorize the rigour of which the Protestants complained, and which had been exercised against them in France and in England, where many were burned for their heretical dogmas.

Soon after the martyrdom of Servetus, a small work, which was afterwards reprinted in Belgium, was written against Calvin, and in confutation of his book in which

he endeavoured to show that heretics were to be restrained by the sword;—it bore the motto, “Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come; who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart.” (1 *Cor.* iv. 5). “The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.” (*Prov.* xii. 6). “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed ye judges of the earth.” (*Ps.* ii. 10). An. Dom. MDLXCII. 8vo. This is the book which Vytenbogardus, Sandius, and many others praise under the title of “Dialogues between Vaticanus and Calvinus.” It is not, however, a volume of Dialogues, but rather an answer in confutation of Calvin’s arguments—which are first stated under his own name, and then answered by Vaticanus. This work appears to have passed through numerous editions, each succeeding edition being augmented by new matters. One of the principal of these is a History of Servetus, supposed to be written by John Preussius; and as it contains some particulars which Allwoerden had not known till it fell into his hands, he has given a copious extract from it; saying, that he suspects the whole to be the work of Castellio, though it may be questioned whether it was written by him or Lælius Socinus. The sale of this work was industriously promoted by the Arminians, while the Calvinists did all in their power to have it suppressed and destroyed. The former boldly accused Calvin of the crime of deliberate murder.*

1. They denied that any man should be put to death on account of religion. If under the Jewish polity false prophets were to be extirpated, the Gospel desires that

* This brochure corroborates the principal facts which have been already stated in the course of this history, respecting the active part taken by Calvin in the entrapping, prosecution, and burning of Servetus.

There was also an apology for Servetus by Gulielmus Postellus, a man of extraordinary erudition. A manuscript copy of this work is noticed by Allwoerden, as being in the library of Du Fay, and in 1725 sold by auction in Paris, and purchased at an enormous price by Count de Hoym, ambassador of the king of Poland to the French court. It was elegantly written, and of an octavo size. Crusius, the French king’s ambassador to Poland, was gratified by a sight of this book, and permitted to extract from it the “*Apologia pro Serveto Villanovano, de anima mundi.*”

the tares shall not be rooted up before the harvest. The Helvetic churches acted wrong in constituting themselves judges in a matter of which they were themselves accused, and it was marvellous that Calvin should concur with those churches in inflicting death on a heretic, when he pronounced their doctrine in several points erroneous, and in a book on the Lord's Supper condemned Zuinglius, Œcolampadius, and Luther of error. If they erred on that subject, they might also err on the subject of persecution.

2. Servetus was put to death by Calvin through the most dishonourable means, by suborning an accuser out of his own kitchen, a menial who knew nothing of Servetus personally, and who was totally ignorant of his opinions;—conduct altogether as distant from the nature of Christianity as earth from heaven, since Christ came not to destroy men's lives but to save them.

3. It was merciless cruelty to condemn him to the flames, especially when he petitioned for the milder punishment of the sword, and pleaded that if he had erred it was through ignorance;—that he was so constituted both in understanding and will, that he wished to promote the glory of God. Moreover, such cruelty created a suspicion that the persecutors wished to gain favour with the Pope, and to show, that though they differed from him in words, they were one with him in deeds.

4. The Evangelicals thus conspired with the Papists, as Pilate with Herod, to the commission of a foul and a detestable crime.

5. The burning of heretics was a practice taken from Popery. If Calvin's doctrine of Predestination and Election were true, they should have been under no apprehension that Servetus could lead any man astray, for if they were elected they could not be seduced; but if sins were necessary, and God decreed them, it was impossible for him to avoid them; nor could the Calvinists be deceived, or escape deception, but as it was predetermined by the divine decree.

6. When Servetus was dead, he was condemned in the public discourses of the preachers to eternal torments, and in such appalling intonations by Farell, that they who heard him shuddered.

7. As they who called Christ a deceiver sought of Pilate to have the keeping of his body, so Calvin feared lest the body of Servetus should be taken away, and his ashes cry out against him. If he wished to write against him, he should have done so while Servetus was living and had power to answer—an indulgence which is granted even to a robber.*

In a letter dated Oct. 15, 1554, very nearly a year after the burning, Calvin wrote to a friend, that, if he knew but the tenth part of the atrocious reproaches with which he is assailed, he would groan out of pure humanity for the miseries he endured. The dogs on all sides bark at me. I am every where called a heretic. I am assailed by every species of calumny. In fine, the envious, and malevolent of our own flock oppose me with more hostility than do our open enemies of the Papacy.—*Epp.* p. 85.

Addressing a friend, he says, I have read in your letters to Farell, that your mind is ulcerated against me, and infected with oblique suspicions. I have learned your opinion concerning the toleration of heretics. Who could have dreamed that you were a disciple of Servetus? What could be more incredible than that you should have hurried to that pitch of madness? Who would not attribute to you the blame of having suffered your deacon not only to manifest hostility to me, and to sound doctrine, but publicly to rage in defence of the insanities of Servetus? And to be open with you, I am informed that you hold heterodox opinions concerning eternal predestination. He then proceeds to inform him of other miseries which he had to endure. So bitterly indeed was he assailed, that he required all the consolation of his friends to sustain him. Bullinger informs him that he knows all, and often hears, that there are not

* *Ex Dialogis inter VATICANUM et CALVINUM*, p. 187.—*Allwoerden*, pp. 160, 161.

wanting those who wish that argument (the burning of heretics) had never been handled by him. He comforts him, however, by letting him know that Urbanus Regius, and the ministers of Lunenburg thought that heretics should be restrained,—that recently Titianus, an Italian Anabaptist, would have been burned, had he not sung his palinode; but that, notwithstanding, he was beaten with rods and expelled,—and that there were some still of opinion that heretics and blasphemers should be imprisoned and beheaded.—(*Epp.* p. 91).

Of those who disturbed the self-complacency of Calvin was Matthæus Gribaldo, an Italian lawyer, who, having fled from persecution in his own country, sought an asylum in Geneva. The persecution of Servetus having excited his indignation, he expressed himself so strongly on the subject, as to bring himself under the cognizance of the heresy-hunters. In a letter to Georgius, Count Wertenberg, Calvin states that as this Gribaldo was suspected of heresy,* he had him summoned into Court—probably before the Consistory—to give an account of his faith, that there he proved himself guilty of tergiversation, and manifested great reluctance to make any confession; but notwithstanding it was discovered that he lacerated the essence of God, and made Christ a God of novel invention, different from the Father. Like Servetus, he wanted *modesty*—blamed the cruelty of the Senate, and was guilty of the awful heresy of maintaining, that men ought not to be punished for holding erroneous opinions in religion, because, every man's faith should be free.† Such a heretic was a fine subject for an *auto-da-fe*, and Calvin might have doubled his renown by conducting him to the stake. But, warned by the fate of Servetus, Gribaldo withdrew from the city to Tübingen, and thence to Berne, where

* When introduced to Calvin, the latter refused him the right hand of fellowship, because he denied the doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. He also acted the part of a prophet, and foretold, that the heavy judgment of God was impending over his impiety, and, according to Beza, the prediction was fulfilled,

† “Non esse de falsis dogmatibus exigendas pœnas, quia libera cuique esset fides.”

being seized by a fatal disease, he anticipated, by his death, the punishment prepared for him.*

Though Calvin had numerous opponents, none seems to have been more formidable to him than Hieronymus Bolsec, a man fully his match in the use of abusive language. He, with many others, accused Calvin of making God the author of evil. The common people both of town and country instigated, it was said, by Bolsec, became furious in reiterating this charge to the no small annoyance of Calvin. In a letter to the ministers of Berne, published by Bretschneider, he informs them that a woman had charged him to his face with that blasphemy and with heresy, and that Granertus (or Grenebardus) a man of some notoriety, did the same, not in an obscure alley, but in a cobbler's stall. Unless such audacity be speedily restrained, he asks, what will be the consequence? Hieronymus Bolsec, he adds, gave him much trouble, for, having gone to Berne, he affirmed before two ministers of the Word that Servetus had been wronged (*Serveto factam injuriam*) and by such assertions not only was he (Calvin) injured, but the whole Church and community of Berne, because it was by their exhortations that punishment had been inflicted on that impious man. Bolsec, therefore, should be prosecuted—but he wishes, with serpent wisdom, to throw the odium of the prosecution from himself on the Bernese, fearful if he should undertake the cause, all would charge him with being implacable in his revenge. His doctrine is exposed to public scandal—and the disgrace rests not on him alone, but falls more copiously on their common gospel. This Hieronymus is a man of indomitable ferocity; he had attacked Claudius Molinæus, a minister of the Word, with such threats and reproaches as very properly subjected him to new punishment.

Notwithstanding the urgency of his letter, the Bernese

* Peste correptus, paratum sibi supplicium morte prævenit.

It appears also that the persecuting zeal of the Senate had begun to cool, for, as Calvin confesses, they were now of opinion that Gribaldo, *being an alien*, he was not to be too closely pressed, it was sufficient for them to prevent the virus of his heresies from spreading.

were less energetic in defending Calvin and prosecuting Bolsec than the former desired. He determined, therefore, to go to Berne, and act as his own advocate. And having, for this purpose, asked and obtained leave from the Senate to go accompanied with some envoys, he went and carried on the prosecution with such success that Bolsec was banished out of the Bernese territories, happy, no doubt, thus to escape the consuming fire of so formidable a foe as the destroyer of Servetus.

But though he succeeded in this affair, he had the mortification to learn that his conduct was far from being approved, and that his great work, the *opus aureum*—the splendid creation of “consecrated intellect”—was regarded by some of the Swiss friends of the Reformation as dangerous and heretical, and that the reading of it was prohibited by the Bernese.*

Calvin, however, was not without his abettors and comforters. Among these appears the name of a man who is generally reckoned one of the mildest, as well as the most learned of the Reformers:—

“Who would not laugh if such a man there be?
Who would not weep if Attieus were he?—”

Philip Melancthon, *proh pudor!* thanks his reverend and most dear father, Calvin, for his refutation of the blasphemies of Servetus, and says that the Church owes him its gratitude now, and will owe it in time to come; that he is entirely of his sentiments in the matter of Servetus, and that the Magistrates acted justly in putting the blasphemer to death. A lamentable proof of his ignorance of the spirit of Christianity, and that, with all his learning, he had no spark of the wisdom that is from above, and was unworthy of the name and character of a Reformer. But he owed Servetus a

* Bayle says that he has read in numerous passages, that the Bernese forbade the reading of Calvin's Institutes.

J'ai lu en bien des endroits, que Messieurs de Berne firent des dēcrets fort desobligeans contre Calvin, l'an 1554 et qu'ils defendirent meme la lecture de son *Institution*. Cela est il vrai?—*Letters de Mr. Bayle*, cexxiii. A. *Mr. Minutoli*.

The name of Calvin was held in detestation by the Papists of Noyon—his birth place. When he had a fever which prevented him from preaching, they had a solemn supplication for his death.

grudge, for having told him, that although in the question of free-will he was less insane than Luther and Calvin, in other subjects his insanity was on a par with theirs. As Melancthon himself was a heretic of the darkest dye, in the judgment of Rome, had he been brought to the stake he would perhaps have abandoned his opinion, that nothing can be more reasonable than the burning or decapitation of heretics.

Calvin thanks his balmy correspondent in suitable terms for his kind letter, and particularly for the splendid eulogy of his zeal in crushing the impiety of the Spaniard.*

When we read of such men as Melancthon, Beza, and Calvin approving and advocating persecuting principles, we may be naturally led to wonder at their improvidence in not seeing how those principles might be brought to act with fatal hostility to themselves. In the judgment of the Roman hierarchy they were arch-heretics, and by their own laws they should have been burned by the Papists for denying transubstantiation; and, should Unitarianism have gained the political ascendancy, had they not placed a sword in the hand of the Unitarian magistrate to cut them off root and branch?

Quam temere in nosmet legem sancimus iniquam?

Contemporary with Beza was Corasius, an eminent civilian, who decidedly maintained that such heretics as denied the being and attributes of God should not merely be burned alive, but should be subjected to more exquisite tortures, if such could be invented. Corasius embraced the doctrines of Calvin, and was butchered as a heretic, A. D. 1572.

The murderers of Corasius could justify themselves, by alleging that they acted in conformity to his own principles; and though he did not deny the being of a God, he was, in fact, guilty of a greater heresy in adopting those notions of Calvin which represent God as the

* "Maxime, quod illic luculento elogio meum in expugnanda Serveti impietate studium commendas.—*Calv. Ep.*

Philip, in a letter to Bullinger, says he wonders how any one can disapprove the severity of the senate of Geneva, in cutting off a pertinacious blasphemer.

author of the "horrible decree"—inexorable, tyrannic, and vindictive.

The censures which fell on Calvin while living have followed his memory when dead. The attempts of his disciples to palliate and defend his conduct have only caused it to be more rigorously scrutinized and condemned. Many of the most distinguished names in the annals of literature, since his days to the present, have felt themselves irresistibly impelled by a sense of justice to brand his conduct to Servetus with their blackest stigma, as if desirous of showing what ignominy must, and ought to cling to the memory of the homicidal persecutor. While few, except some of his unhappy followers, in whom his spirit lives, have had the effrontery to defend him; and of these the majority, out of shame or commiseration for themselves and him, affirm that it was not Calvin, but the spirit of the age that burned Servetus.

Among a host of various writers who have spoken of Calvin in terms of just condemnation, the names of Grotius, Gibbon, Voltaire, John Wesley, and Roscoe stand distinguished. It is refreshing to the mind to turn from the contemplation of such a character as Calvin to that of Hugo Grotius—*magnum et venerabile nomen*—that "Phœnix of Literature,"—a man immeasurably superior to Calvin, Melancthon, and their whole fraternity, in genius, in eloquence, in learning, and in the great christian virtues of justice, charity, and truth.* This profound scholar and faithful interpreter of the sacred writings,† "had no esteem for Calvin." Esteem

* "Dr. Johnson, by Dr. Vyse's account, rejoiced much and was lavish of the praise he bestowed upon his favourite Hugo Grotius." Three points were united in Grotius which would strongly recommend him to Dr. Johnson; he was learned, pious, and opposed to the doctrines of Calvin. It is unnecessary to mention the various encomiums, which the learned of all nations have made of Grotius in prose and verse. That he was one of the most universal scholars whom the world has produced, and that he possessed sense, taste, and genius, in a high degree, is universally confessed. It is equally true that both his public and private character are entitled to a high degree of praise."—*Butler's Life of Grotius*, p. 209.

In this eulogy of his biographer every unprejudiced mind must coincide. How much more worthy to form a sect would Grotius have been than many of the reverend Reformers?

† The Rev. S. Wesley, father of the celebrated John Wesley, preferred Grotius to all other commentators on the Scriptures, and especially on the New Testament.

is a tribute due only to the wise and good. "Speaking of Cassander, he says, he was a very excellent, and, at the same time, a very able man, and therefore most worthy of Calvin's hatred: he advised James Laurentius to read, instead of Calvin's *Institutions*, Vincent de Lerins. * * In his later works he speaks of Calvin with the highest indignation. I know, he says, with what injustice and bitterness this Calvin treated Cassander, Baudoin, and Castellio, who were much better men than himself."* Did the burner of Servetus, he asks, satisfy all men that his own notions of the trinity were orthodox? Nothing less. The very arguments he employed to justify the murder might be turned against himself by the Doctors of the Sorbonne, who, with the Lutherans, accused him of holding the heresy of Arianism.†

Turn we now to an author of another stamp, yet having with Grotius a strong perception of what is base, intolerant, and hypocritical. No one could know the history of Calvin and Servetus better than Voltaire. He affirms that the former acted towards the latter with treachery and theological hatred; that "when he saw his adversary in confinement, he loaded him with every kind of insult and vile treatment that base minds are wont to do when they get the upper hand. At length, by continually pressing the judges to employ the credit of those he pointed out to them, and by proclaiming in person, and by his emissaries, that God demanded the execution of Michael Servetus, he had him burned alive, and took a cruel pleasure in being a witness to his sufferings; he who, if

* *Burigny's Life of Grotius*. Lond. 1754, pp. 285—287.

Calvino credere non audeo, quum sciam, quam inique tractaverit et virulente viros multo se meliores Cassandrum, Baldwinum, Castellionem.
—Grotius

† Fellowes, speaking of the burning of Servetus, says, "on this bloody tragedy Grotius makes the following very judicious remarks.—'At de Trinitate non per omnia bene sensit Servetus: fieri potest; facilis enim lapsus in rebus adeo supra humanum captum positus. At Serveti exustor an isto in argumento satisfacit omnibus? Nihil minus. Sorbonici plures hereticarum opinionum, Lutherani prope omnes Arianismi eum accusant. Urendus ergo fuit, si in iudices incidisset: apud quos tanta erat Sorboni-corum aut Lutheranorum, quanta erat apud Allobröges auctoritas.'"—*Grot. op. Ed. Tom. iii. p. 503.*

Fellowes's Religion without Cant. note p. 5.

he had set a foot in France would have been sent to the stake himself, and who had so loudly exclaimed against all persecution." The finishing stroke to this picture of Calvin may be found in a letter written with his own hand, which is still preserved in the castle of Bastie-Roland, near Montelimar: it is directed to the Marquis de Poet, high chamberlain to the king of Navarre, and dated Sept. 30, 1561.

"Honour, glory, and riches shall be the reward of your pains; but above all, do not fail to rid the country of those zealous scoundrels who stir up the people to revolt against us. Such monsters should be exterminated as I have exterminated Michael Servetus the Spaniard."*

The learned historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire expresses himself thus:—

"I am more deeply scandalized at the single execution of Servetus than at the hecatombs which have blazed in the Autos-da-Fe of Spain and Portugal. 1. The zeal of Calvin seems to have been envenomed by personal malice and perhaps envy.† He accused his adversary before their common enemies—the judges of Vienne—and betrayed, for his destruction, the sacred trust of a private correspondence. 2. The deed of cruelty was not varnished by the pretence of danger to the church or state. In his passage through Geneva, Servetus was a harmless stranger, who neither preached, nor printed, nor made proselytes. 3. A catholic Inquisitor yields the same obedience which he requires, but Calvin violated the golden rule of doing as he would be done by."‡

How deeply the historian felt "scandalized" appears still more strikingly in the following extracts from his miscellaneous writings:—

* Works of Voltaire translated by Smollet, and Frankliu, &c.—Lond. 1763. vol. iv. pp. 82—84.

In the "*Notes et Variantes du Chant Cinquieme*," of "*La Pucelle*," printed in Basle, 1785, Voltaire gives "*le feroce Calvin*," as warm an abode, as that to which he and Faurel consigned Servetus.

† No doubt. It was the same feeling which, as Pilate knew, instigated the Chief Priests to crucify Christ, *Mark*, xv. 10.

‡ *Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, vol. x. p. 191, note.

“The examples of Churches and theologians who declare in favour of the punishment of heretics, are nothing to the present question. Men’s actions are never less guided by their principles, than when those principles run counter to the natural sentiments of humanity. The heart here corrects the errors of the understanding. A man of a humane character, under the influence of a false zeal, will in his closet condemn a heretic to death, but will he drag him to the stake? Not to shudder at the shedding of innocent blood, requires a heart totally insensible to pity. I acknowledge the power of false zeal and an erroneous conscience. It is sufficient to silence the voice of pity, but can it stifle its murmurs? Will not the unhappy theologian feel a combat in his own breast between religion and humanity? Will not the outward expressions of sorrow indicate how deeply he is afflicted to shed his brother’s blood?—In Calvin’s behaviour I see nothing but the most abominable cruelty. He loads Servetus with invectives; he fears lest his victim should escape from his hands; and in a tone of triumph passes on him his sentence of condemnation. But Servetus did not spare the Geneva divine. I know it. But the one loaded with reproaches a wretch whom he had confined in irons; the other only breathed out too loudly his agonies of suffering. Hard must be the heart which does not feel the difference.”

After some farther comments on the conduct of the Reformer, the learned historian concludes thus:—

“When we collect and combine all these circumstances with the acknowledged character of the Reformer, can we doubt that a hard and cruel heart, an ambitious soul, and hatred towards the man who despised his instructions, and impeached his opinions, united with religious zeal in impelling Calvin to persecute the unfortunate Servetus? Voltaire therefore is right, when he says, that Calvin had an enlightened mind, but an atrocious soul.”* Enlightened indeed! Yes; but not

* *Gibbon’s Miscellaneous Works*, Dublin, vol. 11. pp. 456—459.

with holy light from heaven—not with emanations of celestial truth—but with such lurid fires of hell as make “darkness visible, and serve only to discover sights of wo.”

Roscoe, the biographer of Lorenzo de Medici, says, “that the annals of persecution cannot afford a more atrocious instance than the burning of Servetus.” For this assertion he was malignantly attacked in a periodical publication, entitling itself *The Evangelical Magazine* (*lucus a non lucendo*), as if he had been “an enemy to the Reformation—a friend to bigotry and revenge—as possessed of zeal without knowledge, united with an enmity to the kingly authority of Jesus and the best interests of mankind!” A writer in that periodical under the designation of Veritas—as the father of lies may call himself the angel of truth—undertook the Quixotic task of vindicating Calvin, stating that “he lived in days of universal intolerance, when all parties thought that heretics should be destroyed”—that Servetus was a heretic and blasphemer—and, in short, he makes such an apology for his murderers as the inquisitors make for their atrocities, and as the high priest and Pharisees would have made for the crucifixion of Christ. To this diabolical attack, written in the very spirit of Calvin, Roscoe could not condescend to make any reply, perhaps it never attracted his notice. It did not, however, escape castigation. A contributor to the *Monthly Repository* said well, “that the conductors of the *Evangelical Magazine* did themselves no good by attempting to palliate such crimes; that some stains are of such a nature that they will not bear wiping; it only renders them wider and more exposed.”

Mr. Nightingale, writing in vindication of Roscoe’s judgment, says, “Let every circumstance connected with that most horrid transaction be considered; let the low cunning, the detestable hypocrisy, the malignant spirit, the cruel conduct of Calvin be contrasted with the liberal professions, the pretensions to divine love, and all the *cant* of christian *experience* of that Reformer, and I think Mr. Roscoe will be found to have asserted nothing

concerning that lamentable affair but what the state of the case fully justifies." He farther observes that the only well-written passage in the calumnious attack is *stolen* from Roscoe himself; and concludes by saying, truly, that "such conduct is worthy only of those who are the advocates of intolerance, and who could palliate the murder of Servetus."*

In the year 1741, the Rev. John Wesley published a second edition of *A Dialogue between a Predestinarian and his Friend*, which closes as follows:—

"*Pred.*—What then do you think of absolute *unconditional* election and reprobation.

Friend.—I think it cannot be found in Holy Writ, and that it is a plant which bears dismal fruit. An instance of which we have in Calvin himself, who confesses that he procured the burning to death of *Michael Servetus*, a WISE AND HOLY MAN, purely for differing from him in opinion in matters of religion."†

Again, in one of his Sermons, (vol. 4, p. 55,) that pious, excellent, and truly Christian divine says:—

"I dare not insist upon any one's using the word Trinity or Person. I use them myself without any scruple, because I know of none better. But if any man has any scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them? I cannot, much less would I burn a man alive, and that with moist green wood, for saying, 'Though I believe the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, yet I scruple using the words Trinity and Persons, because I do not find those terms in the Bible.' These are the words which merciful John Calvin cites as wrote by Servetus in a letter to himself."‡

* *Monthly Repository*, 1806, pp. 366—370.

† *Wesley's Works*, Lond. 1812, vol. xiv. p. 405.

‡ It may seem not a little remarkable that Calvin objected to the use of the term *trinity*, and that he should express his disapprobation of it thus:—"I like not this prayer, O holy, blessed, and *glorious trinity*, have mercy on us. It savours of barbarity. The word *trinity* is barbarous, insipid, profane; a human invention, grounded on no testimony of God's word; the popish god, or idol, altogether unknown to the prophets and apostles." Such a declaration might have been quite sufficient to hand him over to the tender mercies of the Inquisition, and give him a passport to another world, through such a medium as that through which he sent Servetus.

Every true friend of Christianity will rejoice to find that the wise and good of all denominations reprobate the conduct of the homicide; and when they hear the murder of Servetus mentioned as a “miserable stain on Christianity and the Reformation,” they may with just reason ask, in the words of an eloquent and benevolent friend of truth and of free inquiry:—

“Why should the purest of religions, and the noblest of achievements in the cause of truth be branded by this stigma? Let it be confined to the guilty alone. Calvin has earned the infamy attaching to his name—it is ineffaceable and everlasting—may it be his only punishment! If his own ideas of the Deity were to be realized, what ‘adamantine chains and penal fire’ would await the requital of his crime? But well has it been observed, that if ‘God, according to the Scriptures, has made man in his own image, man has repaid the debt with usury; and made his God in the image of himself—cruel, capricious, tyrannical, malevolent, unforgiving, treacherous, and ever rejoicing in the sufferings, mental and corporeal, of the creatures subjected to the wantonness of his power.’”^{*} Such is the God of Calvin—a being who may and must be dreaded with servile abject apprehension, but whom, by the very constitution of human nature, it is impossible to love.

To the opinions already given of Calvin and his doctrines let us add that of the Rev. Edwd. Tagart, who, after rendering ample justice to his learning, says, “The language which Calvin held, and the spirit which he displayed in his controversies with all who differed from him, whether believing more or less than himself, whether assigning more or less of weight to the fathers and councils of the Romish Church, proves that the essence of popery was in the man, and I scruple not to add, that *he neither felt nor understood the true spirit of the Gospel.*—Ah! Calvinism, thou derivest thy name from a man stained with the blood of his christian

^{*} *Disquisitions on the Theology and Metaphysics of Scripture*, by Andw. Carmichael, M. R. I. A.—London, 1840, vol. i. pp. 136, 137.

brother, because that brother differed in his interpretation of the sacred oracles.”*

The conduct of Calvin in this unhappy transaction has been ascribed to various causes:—

La Roche says that, “The Church of Rome is in a great measure answerable for the execution of Servetus. If the Roman Catholics had never put any body to death on account of religion, I dare say, that Servetus would not have been tried in a Protestant city. Let us remember that Calvin and all the magistrates of Geneva in the year 1553, were born and bred up in the Church of Rome. This is the best apology that can be made for them.”†

Roman Catholic writers, on the other hand, ascribe the murder to the genius of Protestantism. A writer of that class asks:—

“Was it not the ‘genius of Protestantism’ that induced John Calvin, the second apostle of the Reformation, to contend for the right of the civil magistrate to put others to death for matter of opinion, and follow up his doctrine by actually condemning to the flames poor Servetus, his fellow reformer, because he could not discover in the Scriptures the same sense and doctrines which Calvin pretended to discern?”‡

Some contend that it was not Calvin—it was the spirit of the age—that occasioned the death of Servetus.

Such is the constant apology for the indefensible atrocity. It was the duty of a reformer to act in opposition to the spirit of the age, when that spirit was in opposition to the gospel—when it was oppressive, intolerant, and antichristian. The gospel injunction is “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.” No man who suffers himself to be carried away by the evil spirit of an evil age has any claim to the title of a Reformer.

“The system [popery] which taught a priest to

* *Sketches of the Lives and Characters of the Leading Reformers of the Sixteenth Century*, by Edward Tagart, F.S.A.

† *Memoirs of Literature*, vol. iv. pp. 73, 74.

‡ *Letter to the Liberal of all Denominations*, by William Eusebius Andrews. p. 23.

trample on the necks of emperors, and vindicate the deed as *religious*, must have possessed a power truly Satanic in blinding and deadening the consciences of its devotees. Calvin was for years one of the most zealous and abject of them all."

So says one of his most recent apologists. But what apology is this for a mighty reformer? When he cast off the slough of popery wherefore did he retain the propensity to trample on human necks, and even indulge it by trampling on the necks of the syndics of Geneva? How happened it that when he was visited by the grace of God, when "like Joseph, the Lord was with him and he became a prosperous man," he still continued subject to Satanic influences which blinded and deadened his conscience, and led him not only to strangle every expression of thought which he was pleased to call heretical, but to employ Satanic influences to aid him in the perpetration of homicide?

Calvin knew as little of the genuine principles of the reformation as of the true spirit of the gospel. The great principles of the Reformation were the sufficiency of Scripture and the right of individual judgment. On these principles neither Calvin nor his followers have ever acted. They allow no such rights, or if they sometimes make a profession of them, their popes and their synods take due care to render them nugatory, assuming to themselves the attribute of infallibility, asserting that their interpretation of Holy Writ, as concocted in their Confessions, is the only certain guide to salvation, and damning, without pity, to the infernal regions all who dare to dispute their authority. In many regions Calvinism is to this day as ignorant, as intolerant, and barbarous as it was when it issued from the brain of its founder. It still continues to consign the heathen to damnation, and question the "salvability" of unbaptized infants!

That there are individuals, and churches, and synods, and general assemblies that still adhere to the doctrines of Calvin is one of the most lamentable facts connected with the history of religion in modern times. It shows

how little progress the Reformation has made in some regions; and what dark clouds of ignorance and superstition must be dispersed before the light of gospel truth can be contemplated by them in its purity and splendour. Calvin's doctrines should have died with himself never to be revived. But unhappily they are kept alive by his priests and instilled with all their poison into one generation after another, in defiance of the reclamations of reason and the authorities of Scripture. Their tendency is not to make Christians, but bigots, persecutors, and unbelievers; they place in the hands of infidels the most formidable weapons with which revelation has ever been assailed.* Since they rob man of his hope, and God of his mercy, it is surely incumbent on every sincere christian and honest man, to raise his voice against them—to disabuse the minds of those who are rendered miserable by adopting them—and proving that the Gospel of Christ is in all its doctrines, precepts, influences and tendencies, as remote from Calvinism as heaven from hell.

As to the spirit of Calvin's age, more has been said than can be proved. If the creatures of Calvin, with some priests, and a priest-ridden race sanctioned his cruelty, how many stamped it with reprobation? Beza was a sanguinary and inhuman bigot, and as ignorant of the genius of Christianity as Calvin himself. Melancthon was a pusillanimous creature who made a bad use of his learning, and was more the slave of fear than the champion of truth. A man like Servetus was worth a thousand of such pretended reformers. He stood firm to the principles of the Reformation, with the Scriptures for his guide, and set no value on the doctrines of St. Augustine, or any other pretended saint. In his argu-

* No greater obstacle to the introduction of Christianity among the Hindus has ever been raised than the doctrines of Calvin, and particularly his false and blasphemous representations of the character of the Almighty. A writer in the *Madras Crescent*, June, 1847, says that he has heard Calvinism denounced among them as "full of extreme wickedness and blasphemy against God." He enters into a comparison between Hinduism and Calvinism, by no means favourable to the latter, and concludes by expressing a wish that its creed may be banished from the earth, and supplanted by the Gospel, differing as it does from Calvinism as much as light from darkness.

ments with Calvin he demanded scripture proof, and embarrassed his antagonist by insisting on that, and by not admitting the dogmas of the fathers as having any authority; but to scripture proof he was ready to yield—for he was pledged to no system. He had no possible interest in adhering to any opinions unless it were to those which were the most popular or most pleasing to his persecutors; but, on the contrary, the strongest arguments capable of operating on the human mind, abstracted from the love of truth, to induce him to favour the reigning superstitions.

It is a bitter satire on the age to say that it was its spirit that burned Servetus. It was the spirit of Calvinists, priests, and inquisitors; but the numbers of martyrs who died by hundreds and thousands in support of principles opposed to those of their persecutors, and in defiance of the most excruciating torments, demonstrate that it was not the spirit of the people. The treatises written to confute and expose the cruelty and wickedness of Calvin, and the clamorous reproaches which assailed him from all quarters, both at home and abroad, demonstrate that it was not the spirit of the age. It was not the spirit of Castellio, of Gribaldo, of the Socini, and a host of others. Because in our own times there are rampant polemics, and ferociously-religious demagogues, and rapacious theologasters in league with unprincipled men of law to take advantage of obsolete statutes to rob their neighbours, shall we justify them by saying that they act only in the spirit of the age—that it is the spirit of the age to go to law, to vilify, to lie, to commit perjury, to defraud—in pursuance of their selfish designs to impose upon and overreach a too credulous government—and in the management of every literary institution and charitable trust into which they have once been admitted, to manœuvre until they acquire an ascendancy, and then, like the young of the cuckoo that are hatched in another bird's nest, litch out the rightful owners, their foster brethren, and for themselves take possession of the whole? This we know is the spirit in which some who are deemed

mighty men of God act, and stimulate others to act; and who want the power more than the inclination to proceed to still more flagrant violations of justice—but yet let it not be called the spirit of the age. It is not the spirit of the British Constitution, nor of the glorious parliament that passed the Dissenters' Chapels Bill, and rescued the Unitarians out of the fangs of the holy men of God who had marked them for destruction.

If men fond of recondite investigations, search for imaginary causes of plain effects afar off, when the real cause may be found nigh at hand, let them, in this case, rather say it was not the Church of Rome, nor the genius of Protestantism, nor the spirit of the age, that destroyed Servetus, but the spirit of one who procured a decree “to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish the people of God, and to take the spoil of them for a prey” —even the spirit of the wicked Haman in the Persian court, which, after a series of transmigrations, became incarnate in the person of John Calvin, of the city of Geneva. Or may it not more simply still be ascribed to “Satanic influences,” and the instigation of the devil?

If it was the spirit of Calvin's age to burn heretics, at what an immeasurable distance was Servetus in advance of his age when he maintained that no one should suffer persecution or death for his religious opinions? His assertion and advocacy of the doctrine of the divine unity raises him, as a reformer, far above Calvin and all his crew. This is the great truth which reason asserts and revelation proclaims, and which no twisting of texts, nor fictions of the Fathers, nor metaphysics of dreamers, nor persecution by fire and sword can ever invalidate or overthrow. It is full time that preachers and divines should quit descanting about hypostases, and persons, and trinities, and discourse upon subjects which can be understood, which tend to improve the human mind, and work a moral regeneration among the children of men.

Notes.

NOTE, p. 9.

“*The circulation of the blood in the human frame.*”

WOTTON, in his *Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning*, says “that Servetus was the first, as far as he could learn, who had a distinct idea of this matter. His sagacity in this particular, before so much in the dark, gives us reason to believe, that had he wholly confined himself to his own profession (and been permitted to live) the world might have had just cause to have blessed his memory.” (p. 215). And it is highly probable, adds a friend, that as he had explained the lesser circulation of the blood from the heart to the lungs, and from the lungs to the heart again, he would also have discovered the systemic circulation from the heart to all parts of the body. The reader who wishes for farther information on this topic may consult the *Medico-chirurgical Review* for April, 1847, p. 411.

In pursuing his researches he might not only have anticipated Harvey in completing his discovery, but thrown much light on other departments of physical science. The reader may be confirmed in this opinion by a small work, published in 1826, by a gentleman well entitled to the praise of every friend of truth, for the justice he has rendered to the character of Servetus as an ardent investigator of the truth. George Sigmond, M.D., late of Jesus' College Cambridge, and formerly President of the Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh, being, as he informs us, in possession of a copy of that most rare work *Christianismi Restitutio*, wished to print those extracts from it that relate to Physiology in a correct and ungarbled form, and accordingly published them in a small work entitled *The Unnoticed Theories of Servetus*, Lond., 1826. In the Introduction to his Dissertation which is in Latin he says, “I have quoted the whole of the theories verbatim. Those that relate to the phænomena of mind, as produced by the brain, will at this time have an additional interest when Gall and Spurzheim have attracted the attention of philosophers to the subject. With some degree of boldness he has fixed upon the ventricles of the brain, and the choroid plexus, as the seat of that ray divine, which an immortal Creator has shed upon man, and man alone. * * After giving his description of the passage of the blood from the right ventricle of the heart, through the lungs to the left ventricle of the heart he gives his reasons for

his belief in his doctrine of the circulation, and observes that Galen was unacquainted with the truth. He then commences that most extraordinary passage upon the seat of the mind." After describing the motions and action of the blood on the brain, he speaks of the soul as the breath of life; and "the whole of the theories he has advanced are in support of the passages in the Bible, relative to the Almighty pouring into the nostrils of man the breath of life. A long metaphysical and theological discussion, difficult to be understood, follows; but not one syllable can be found contrary to the precepts of Christianity, or to the pure faith he wished to instil into the mind."

"A sincere love of Christianity beams forth in every page of the work. His great anxiety was to restore religion to that purity which he believed it to have lost. The doctrine he opposed was not that of Christ; it was that of the Churchmen who had established, in his name, their own vain and fleeting opinions. The best proof that Calvin and Melancthon had deserted the mild, the charitable, the peaceful religion of truth, and that they followed not the divine precepts of their gentle Master, was, and is, that they pursued, even unto death, a helpless, poor, and learned man."

"Calvinus, vehemens feroxque natura sese præbuit—et, eheu! illi 'tanta potuit suadere malorum,' ut Scrvetus ille egregius, nihil vero peceans, nihil contra bonos mores, nihil contra consuetudinem civilem, nihil denique Christianismi fidem dilectissimam, moliens, non solum in carcerem, non solum ad supplicium, non solum ad mortem, sed imo etiam ad cruciatum! ad ignem duce-retur! Si hoc fuit justum, "Quæ potest esse pietas? quæ sanetitas? quæ religio?"—*Sigmondi Dissertatio*, pp. 36, 37.

NOTE, p. 13.

"As to the question of the *Trinity*, he expresses great dread of its revival."

WRIGHT justly observes "That the fears of Melancthon, on this subject, implied a secret dread that the subject would not bear to be deeply examined; otherwise what evil could he have to apprehend from its being discussed? The Reformers were not afraid of entering the lists of controversy with the Papists, why should they be afraid of doing the same with the Antitrinitarians, if conscious they had as much truth on their side in the one case as in the other? The fact is, in disputing with the latter, they found themselves standing on Popish ground and they used Popish weapons; they wrapped themselves in the garb of mystery, and drew the sword of persecution: proscription, dungeons, and devouring flames were their auxiliaries. They needed not such weapons when they contended with the Papists;

then they had reason and Scripture to support them; they could appeal from popes and councils to prophets and apostles, and plead the dictates of common sense; they could assert the rights of conscience, and contend for the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. It was quite different when they contended with Antitrinitarians; then they had to grapple with the plain declarations of Scripture, to fight against reason and common sense; consequently they were glad to resume the weapons which they had before derided."

NOTE, p. 29.

"*Servetus tells Calvin that he cuts his throat with his own sword.*"

HERE is a slight mistake; it was Calvin who said this to Servetus—*vides qualiter tuo gladio te jugulas.*

The whole scope of his answer to Calvin, he says, was to show that the name SON was given, in the sacred writings, to Christ solely as to a man; that in confirmation of this he quoted all the passages of Scripture in which the term occurs, and that in none of them does it ever occur in any other sense. If, therefore, the Scripture employs it uniformly in one sense, we should not employ it in any other. In confirmation of his opinion he makes sixteen quotations from Tertullian, ten from Irenæus, and five from the Apostle Peter and Clement his disciple.

Throughout his reply to Calvin, he evinces more courage than prudence, as if his object were as much to provoke and irritate his enemy, as to confute his statements. Sometimes he assails him with bitter irony, as when he says, your candid mind every where displays itself—*Candidus ubique se ostendit animus!* He pities his ignorance, accuses him of condemning what he does not understand,* of uttering falsehoods and omitting the truth; again and again he says emphatically, *thou liest* (mentiris); and asks if he imagines that Jewish ears are to be deafened by his canine barking. To one so much accustomed to be regarded as the Theological Dictator and the infallible oracle of divine truth, such charges, though just, were intolerable, and not to be expiated even by the accuser's death;—nor were they, for having burned his body on earth he condemned his soul to hell.

NOTE, p. 42.

"*The system of Calvin has been compared to the Sabine institutions which Livy terms disciplinam tristem et tetricam.*"

Few, if any, descriptions can match the sad reality of the tendencies and effects of Calvinism to harden the human heart—to

* O te miserum si damnare pergas ea quæ non intelligis.

enslave the mind to the most harrowing fears and superstitions, and drive it to despair and suicide. The following passage from a speech of W. J. Fox, M. P., delivered in the town hall, Salford, Manchester, June, 1830, may assist the reader to form an idea of its horrors:—

“I trust that those who have been educated in another and a better age, and in a purer faith, and whose religious life has flowed on clear and unruffled under the sunshine of divine truth, —I trust that they will excuse what may seem intemperance of language in those who, like me, have had painful demonstration of the mischiefs produced by Calvinism in the name of Christianity. Recollections of this description are in my mind which can never be erased. I have seen the anxious mother stand by the cradle of her sick and suffering child, and doubt the salvation of her own infant if it expired. I have seen men who believed that their day of grace was past; that there was no room for repentance left for them upon the earth, and who were constantly driven to despondency and gloom, and to repeated attempts at self-destruction. I have stood by the bedside of the dying and sincere, but not consistent, believer in these creeds, and I have heard his screams of anguish in the anticipation of a speedy dismissal to the torments of eternal fires. I have stood by the bedside of the infidel, and have seen him departing this life strong in his infidelity, because he could not believe that any being deserving of veneration, would act as orthodoxy told him that God, whose name is Love, did.”—p. 14.

NOTE, p. 55.

“*Castellio, a man, says Limborch, not inferior in learning and piety to Calvin.*”

“CASTELLIO, a good-natured, pious, worthy man, and who knew by experience this fatal disposition [to persecute] in Calvin, knew also how to paint it, and did it in a very mild manner considering the times: speaking of the church of Geneva, and of some other in Switzerland which were influenced by the same persecuting principles, expresses himself thus:—*

“As they have a greater esteem for that uncharitable doctrine of their church than for charity itself, they decree as a certain and undeniable principle that to recede from the doctrine is a greater sin than to do immoral actions. Therefore, though a man among them be very vicious, covetous, a backbiter, slanderous, deceitful, envious, passionate, spiteful—provided he agrees with them in their opinion about baptism, predestination, free-

* De Hæreticis a civili magistratu non puniendis pro Martini Belli farragine adversus libellum Theodori Bezae. *Libellus M. S.*

will, and the like—provided he resorts to sermons and sacraments, and has a great veneration for preachers—he is a Christian: Christ did wipe off his past, present, and future sins?

“But let a man be free from all those vices, and put it out of their power to upbraid him with any fault, if he only differs from them in any of their tenets, as baptism, predestination, free-will, or *persecution*; he is a heretic and rotten member, he must be cut off from the body of the Church. There is no charity, no obedience to Christ’s commandments, no inoffensive behaviour, which are the true fruits of the true doctrine, for the tree of immoral doctrine cannot bear moral good fruits, *nothing of the kind* shall recommend him to them, but he shall be rejected as a devil.”—Then the Latin adds “We have many instances of this, but especially in the person of *Monsieur de Fallais*, who, after he had been extolled to the skies by *Calvin*, was by him sunk to hell, as soon as he began to differ from him on account of persecuting *Jerom [Bolsec]* the Physician; on the same account he proclaimed Fallais an heretic in a public congregation.”*

NOTE, p. 97.

“*Calvin’s conduct to Gruet, the comic poet, has few parallels in atrocity.*”

JACQUES GRUET, irritated at some of his friends, the libertines, having been made to go down upon their knees publicly in the church, and he himself having been apostrophised by Calvin from the pulpit, with the names of *chien* and *goinfre*, took his revenge by putting up against the pulpit in St. Peter’s a writing in which the reform was derided and the reformers grossly insulted. The unlucky author was discovered, and other blasphemous writings in his house, together with a treasonable correspondence with some foreign prince, whose interference he was endeavouring to obtain in the affairs of Geneva, by setting him against Calvin. Gruet was tried for this crime, condemned, and beheaded.”—*Simond*, pp. 335, 336.

NOTE, p. 120.

“*In the case of Bolsec they had shown more lenity than Calvin.*”

“EARLY in life Calvin had published a book, much celebrated in its day, on *Predestination* and *Divine Providence*; the doctrine of

* *Literary Journal*, 1744, pp. 335, 336, Dublin.

which he maintained throughout his life, while acting in direct opposition to it—that is, asserting that men cannot possibly be otherwise than they were intended beforehand, and at the same time employing the severest means to force them to be otherwise. The magistrates of Berne would not pass any approbation or censure on this doctrine, but wisely forbade their clergy preaching on such *high matters*. Those of Geneva, abandoning the circumspection they had shown before, when they declared some abstruse questions respecting baptism to be better calculated to shake our faith than to strengthen it, now lent to the doctrine of predestination, the assistance of the law. They kept the physician Bolsec a long time confined for saying that ultimate evil was not consistent with the existence of God, whose infinite goodness and omnipotence cannot be supposed to have doomed beforehand some men to everlasting torments and some others to everlasting bliss. He would have been made to atone for his opinion with his life, if the other reformed churches in Switzerland, all inclined to his way of thinking, had not interposed in his favour. A poor dyer in Geneva, who dabbled in theology, was made to beg pardon on his knees before the Consistory, for saying that *Calvin might, after all, be in an error, and should not be ashamed to acknowledge it as St. Augustine had done before*. Others were censured publicly, or underwent slight punishment, for differing on this point with the sovereign pontiff of the reformed church; and finally, a man of melancholy celebrity (Servetus) was sent to the stake.”—*Simond*, pp. 336, 337.

NOTE, p. 136.

“*What had the Reformers to do with those laws, or those laws with the Reformers?*”

“OF what authority could such laws (as those which had been enacted by Justinian and Theodosius against heretics of the Holy Church) be in the *Protestant* state of Geneva? The fact is, that these laws were seldom if at all acted upon for the punishment of alleged heresy in the Western empire. Heretics were put to death generally by virtue of the bulls or rescripts of the Popes, who arrogated to themselves this power in religious matters in all Catholic countries. We believe that the first imperial edicts under the authority of which alleged heretics were consigned to the stake in Europe were the constitutions of Frederic II., who, to show his gratitude to the Pope for placing on his head the imperial diadem, issued, in 1220, those nefarious ordinances for the suppression of the sectaries then swarming in Italy and France. These edicts, for the protection of the pure Catholic faith, were the productions of the orthodox zeal of that atheis-

tical monarch, and his equally, unbelieving Chancellor Peter de Vignes.* Geneva having in former times been an imperial city, these constitutions had there, during that period, the force of law; but if they were valid for the burning of Servetus, they were equally valid against his Protestant prosecutors and judges, and would, if put in force, have consigned them all alike to the stake."

NOTE, p. 159.

"He made no retractation of his principles, but evinced the firmness and constancy of a genuine martyr."

CALVIN and his friends would have been delighted, had they been able to prove that Servetus denied or abandoned the principles for which he suffered. But by their own admissions they establish the very facts which they wish to overthrow. Yair says "he chose to be burnt rather than make the least act of submission;" and Calvin "writing in his own defence, declares that in his opinion, he was in no danger of being punished with any severity, if he had shown himself in the least tractable, or given the least hope of returning to the right way. It was always in his option to have purchased his life in giving the smallest token of *modesty*, which he certainly would have done if he had not lost his senses."

What other proof of the genuine spirit of a martyr, than resolution to be burned rather than recant, would such equitable judges require?

NOTE, p. 166.

"The dogs on all sides bark at me. I am every where called a heretic."

To add to Calvin's grievances, some circumstances of a domestic nature tended much to embitter his life. His brother, the Hon. Anthony, who has been introduced to the reader before in this memoir, had a spouse whose infidelity brought him into disgrace, and deeply wounded the peace of the Reformer. She resided in the house of Calvin, and was detected in adultery with crook-backed Peter.† Calvin himself states the fact in a letter to

* *Pierro delle Vigne*, to whom Dante has assigned a remarkable place in his *Inferno*, Canto xiii.—*Christian Reformer*, January, 1847, p. 17.

† *Plura non sinit animi aegritudo. Nam quum domi meae habitaret lupa illa, quæ tunc fratris erat uxor, deprehendimus cum Petro gibboso scortatam esse.*—*Joannis Calvinii, &c., Literæ quædam*—*nondum Editæ*—by Bretschneider. Lip. 1835.

Viret, in great depression of spirit, but consoles himself with the hope that his brother would obtain a divorce. Farell felt acutely for his friend on this occasion; and says that it will behove the pious Anthony to be separated from a wife whom he designates by epithets of more strength than courtesy.* He grieves for the family disgrace, but construes it as a trial from the Lord to prevent his servant from being too much elated by the magnitude of his divine revelations! †

Happily for the spouse of the Hon. and pious Anthony, and for crook-backed Peter, they were not accused of heresy. But wherefore did not Calvin show his zeal for the glory of God and the divine institutions of Moses, by having them both burned notwithstanding? As he was so mighty in the Scriptures that he could twist out of them any meaning he chose, he could have easily found both precept and example for burning such sinners. Did not Judah say of Tamar, "Bring her forth and let her be burned,"? (*Gen.* xxxviii. 24), and was it not a positive command that "if the daughter" (and if the daughter why not the sister-in-law?) of the priest, so "profaned herself, she should be burned with fire."? (*Lev.* xxi. 9). It is indeed true that the Blessed Saviour did not act thus by the woman taken in adultery, though the Calvins of his day wished him to stone her, but as the Reformer acted in such contempt of the example and violation of the precepts of Christ in other instances, might he not also in this; and for the honour of his faith have thus demonstrated that heresy was not the only crime which they knew how to correct in Geneva?

Voltaire, speaking of some of the Reformers, says "they were men of the most rigid manners, and all their words were dipt in gall. If they condemned celibacy in the priests, and set open the gates of the convents, it was only to turn all society into a convent. Shows and entertainments were expressly forbid by their religion; and for upwards of two hundred years there was not a single musical instrument allowed in the city of Geneva."!

Sonthey, in his *Omniana*, vol. ii. p. 189, Lond., 1812, speaking of a work which he characterizes as "a most extraordinary compound of heathen learning and Catholic [Calvinistic] bigotry?" adds "In intolerant and barbarous bigotry indeed, the writer is only surpassed by the Eclectic reviewer, who affirms that 'thousands of unhappy spirits, and thousands yet to increase their number, will everlastingly look back with unutterable anguish on the nights and days in which Shakespere ministered to their guilty delights.'"

* Oportebit pium Antonium separari a tam putido acorto, tam ebrioso.—*Id.* Notwithstanding these opprobrious epithets which, perhaps, she merited, she could console herself with the reflection of her friends, that adulteries and homicides, do not take away the state of grace. "*Non auferre statum gratiæ adulteria et homicidia.*"

† This was a maxim with the Calvinists in the time of Grotius, and which they no doubt bequeathed to their pious descendants."—*Fellowes's Religion without Cant.* p. 5. *Note.*
† *Quædam Literæ Joannis Calvini, Theod. Bezae, Henrici IV. Regis, aliorumque illius avi nondum Editæ*, published by C. G. Bretschneider, Lipsiæ, 1835.

NOTE, p. 171.

“*Hugo Grotius—magnum et venerabile nomen.*”

“THE leader and guide of commentators in every branch of sacred criticism, and principally that of the New Testament, was the celebrated Hugh de Groot (Grotius), who shone above all the interpreters of his day, in knowledge of the ancient languages, good taste in the art of interpretation, an uncommon genius, and a noble gift of elucidating the obscure and penetrating into the sense of the Holy Scriptures.”—SEILER’S *Hermeneutics*, pp. 11, 12.

“In refuting the apology of Rivetus, he speaks with all the zeal of a Roman Catholic disputant, and proves that the Calvinists are Schismatics and had no mission; that they neither had miracles for them, nor any particular command from God: that *the Ministers are factious spirits, who seek only to disturb the state; that their religion is new, and has not antiquity on its side.*”—BURIGNY’S *Life of Grotius*, p. 287.

Speaking of Servetus, he says, if his opinion concerning the doctrine of the Trinity were erroneous he was excusable, for in a subject so far beyond human comprehension, it is an easy matter to fall into error. But did the burner of Servetus satisfy all men as to his own orthodoxy? Nothing less.* Many of the Sorbonists accused him of holding heretical opinions, and almost all the Lutherans, of Arianism. Therefore he should be burned if he fell into the hands either of the Sorbonists or Lutherans, who possessed an authority equal to his own.†

NOTE, p. 173.

“*I am more deeply scandalized at the single execution of Servetus, than at the hecatombs which have blazed in the Autos-da-fe of Spain and Portugal,*” &c.

GIBBON, though scandalized by this cruel deed, did not, like Priestley, appreciate the virtue of Servetus in dying as a martyr to the truth, nor consider the effect of his example in future times. In a letter declining a challenge to a theological controversy with Priestley, he conveys to him the “almost unanimous wish of the philosophic world, that he would confine his talents and industry to those sciences in which real and useful

* Calvin, in the epistle annexed to his *Admonitio ad Fratres Polonos*, confesses that he dislikes prayer to the Holy Trinity as savouring altogether of barbarism. “*Precatio vulgo trita est, Sancta Trinitas unus Deus miserere nostri, non mihi placeat, ac omnino barbariem sapit.*”—CALVINI, *opp.* vol. viii. p. 591 b.

† At de Trinitate non per omnia bene sensit Servetus: fieri potest: *facilis enim lapsus in rebus adeo supra humanum captum positis. At Serveti exustor an isto in argumento satisfacit omnibus? Nihil minus. Sorbonici plures hereticarum opinionum, Lutherani prope omnes, Arianisini eum accusant. Urendus ergo fuit, si in iudices incidisset; apud quos tanta erat Sorbonicorum aut Lutheranorum, quanta ipsius erat apud Allobroges auctoritas.*—GROT. *op. Ed.* Tom. iii. p. 503

improvements can be made." And adds, "remember the end of your predecessor Servetus, not of his life (the Calvins of our days are restrained from the use of the same fiery arguments,) but I mean the end of his reputation. His theological writings are lost in oblivion; and if his book on the Trinity be still preserved, it is only because it contains the first rudiments of the discovery of the *circulation of the blood*."

Dr. Priestley says in reply, "Now, odd as it will appear to you, the esteem of a very few rational Christian friends (though I know well that it will ensure me the detestation of the greater part of the present nominally Christian world that happen to hear me) gives me more real satisfaction than the applause of what you call the philosophic world. I admire Servetus, by whose example you wish me to take warning, more for his courage in dying for the cause of important truth, than I should have done, if, besides the certain discovery of the circulation of the blood, he made any other the most celebrated discovery in philosophy."*

The learned historian might have reflected that had it not been for such men as Servetus he might himself have been the subject of an *auto-da-fe*.

NOTE, p. 175.

"Roscoe says that 'The annals of persecution cannot afford a more atrocious instance than the burning of Servetus.'"

ROSCOE quotes, from the notes on *Pope's Essay on Criticism*, the opinion of Warburton "who, in speaking of Erasmus, says—For the other reformers, such as Luther, Calvin, and their followers, understood so little in what true Christian charity consisted that they carried with them, into the reformed churches, that very spirit of persecution which had driven them from the church of Rome."

NOTE, p. 181.

"It was not the spirit of the age."

It has been calculated that the Inquisition put to death 150,000 in the course of thirty years; and that not less than 900,000 orthodox Christians were massacred in the same space of time, after the Institution of the Jesuits. Was it the spirit of the age, or of intolerant priests and sanguinary bigots, that perpetrated these massacres?

* *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. ii. pp. 97—99.

Supplementary Notes.

THE following extracts from a Review of "*Audin's Life of Calvin*," in the *Athenæum* for November, 1841, pp. 845, 848, might have been wrought into their proper places in the history, had they fallen sooner under the author's observation. They corroborate some of the principal facts noticed in the work, and throw a lurid light on the character of Calvin.

NOTE, p. 30.

"*The Dedicatory Epistle to the king of France has been particularly admired.*"

THE dedication (of the *Christian Institutes*) to Francis I., rises to the dignity of eloquence, and the chapter on toleration, contains passages that deserve to be written in letters of gold. It is painful to add, that the sentences defending freedom of opinion were subsequently expunged by the author. When Servetus, from his dungeon, appealed to the writings of his judge, Calvin felt, that to retain such passages as the following, would be to second his own condemnation: "Though it may be wrong to form intimacy or friendship with those who hold pernicious opinions, yet must we contend against them only by exhortations, by kindly instructions, by clemency, by mildness, by prayers to God, that they may be so changed, as to bear good fruits, and be restored to the unity of the church; and not only are erring Christians to be so treated, but even Turks and Saracens."

This is a remarkable passage as coming from Calvin. Does it not clearly intimate, that the false notions of religion which he embraced for himself, and transmitted to posterity, totally perverted his nature, and changed the mild and clement divine, into a merciless persecutor and homicide?

When a student at Paris: "To convince Francis I., of the impolicy of persecution, he edited the *Treatise on Clemency*, which Seneca addressed to Nero. It was probably the first time that an editor proved himself utterly ignorant of the author, whose

work he published. Calvin confounded the two Senecas, father and son, and protracted the life of his author to the patriarchal age of 115 years. This unhappy blunder was fatal." To repair his finances, which were exhausted by this publication, he wrote for Cop, rector of Sorbonne, that discourse which has been noticed, (page 96). "Calvin wrote for him an Essay on Justification by faith alone, not knowing, that he was pronouncing to his astonished hearers, the most obnoxious of the doctrines of Luther. The old Doctors of Sorbonne could scarce believe their ears; they sprung from their benches, and rushed upon Cop, who could only save himself by a hasty flight: and Calvin, who was known to be his assistant, was forced to escape from Paris in the disguise of a vine-dresser."

NOTE, p. 30.

"Calvin was no gospel writer, nor gospel preacher."

"THE chilling effect of Calvin's creed is manifest in his references to the Bible; we see that he loved to dwell with a gloomy satisfaction, on the extirpation of the idolatrous nations of Canaan, the hewing of Agag to pieces, the massacre of Baal's priests by the command of Elijah; but he had no sympathy for the lessons of mercy and love contained in the Gospels."

"In one of his printed sermons, he discusses the question of education; and the only principle to be deduced from it is, the duty of whipping. When a school-boy, "his fellow-pupils hated him as a tell-tale, commonly saying, 'we wish Calvin would advance in his declensions: he never gets farther than the *accusative case*.'"

"A few of Calvin's sermons have been published, but no less than 2,023 are preserved in manuscripts at Geneva, and nearly as many more at Berne. He was too close an adherent to logic to be a popular preacher; the sermons we have seen are all dry, syllogistic treatises, mere skeletons, without a particle of flesh and blood. It was of such compositions that one of our English reformers indignantly asked, 'Can these dry bones live?'"

NOTE, p. 52.

"Servetus distinctly charged Calvin with having sent certain leaves of his work to Lyons."

CALVIN not only sent the private letters of Servetus to the Inquisitor of Vienne, but "wrote two anonymous letters, yet in existence, which were mysteriously conveyed to the Inquisitor, reproaching him with his negligence in the extirpation of heresy."

“The burning of Servetus was no isolated act of bigotry ; persecution for heresy was a recognized principle of the Church of Geneva, and it had sent many victims to the scaffold and the stake.”

NOTE, p. 129.

“As for the orders you gave, that something should be done to keep me clean, they have not been performed.”

“THE Senate ordered that Servetus should receive shirts and linen, but Calvin opposed such clemency, and he was obeyed. The Protestant historian who records this fact, merely quotes the extract from the register, declaring that he could not trust himself to make any comment.”

NOTE, p. 158.

Calvin's personal appearance. “He appeared bronzed all over.”

“A LETTER preserved in the Archæological Collections of Grems, which has escaped M. Audin, gives us a graphic picture of Calvin's personal appearance at this period.”—“He resembles an old hermit of the Thebaid, emaciated by long vigils and fasting; his cheeks are sunken, his forehead furrowed, his face colourless as that of a corpse; but his brilliant eyes glow with an unearthly fire; his figure is slightly bowed, the bones seem bursting through his skin, but his step is steady, and his tread firm.”

NOTE, p. 190.

“The Civil Code of Geneva.”

“THE civil code of Geneva was subjected to Calvin's revision, as well as its spiritual discipline. In this task he was aided by a jurist named Colladon; and the result of their joint labours was a most sanguinary system of criminal law. Calvin professed to have taken the Levitical law for his model, but in one enactment he clearly followed the Grand Turk,—faithless wives were doomed to be drowned in the lake without even the decent ceremony of the sack used on the shores of the Bosphorus. The records of the Consistory and Senate are indeed a lamentable mixture of farce and tragedy. In every page we find records of confessions extorted by the rack, which appears to have been in constant action.”

“THE regulations issued by the tribunal of morals are ridiculously minute; they limit the number of dishes to be brought to table; they forbid cards, games of chance, dancing, the use of strong wines, and of expensive ornaments; they prescribe the shape of breeches and shoes for men, and of head dresses for women. This tribunal soon rivalled the Consistory, which it was instituted to assist; for we find three jolly tanners sentenced to be imprisoned and kept on bread and water, for eating three dozen of patés at their breakfast, ‘which was a great excess.’ We find also ‘Henry de Mar sentenced to three days’ imprisonment, for having blamed Calvin;’ and Chapuis imprisoned for four days, because he insisted on having his son baptized Claude, when the minister recommended him to name the boy Abraham.”

“WHEN Calvin wanted a wife, he wrote circulars to his friends, requesting that they would look out for a wife suitable to a preacher. The qualifications he required are enumerated in a letter to Farell.”

“I care not for personal charms—the only beauty which delights me is, that she should be chaste, economical, obedient, patient, and that there should be a reasonable hope of her being attentive to the care of my health.”

“Several young ladies were proffered to the advertiser, but they were all rejected on the score of levity; at length the widow of a German Anabaptist presented herself, and though she was encumbered with a large family by her former husband, she carried away the prize from all her competitors. The only circumstance recorded of this union is, that the only child which Calvin had was still-born, and that Calvin’s insensibility on the occasion gave great offence to his wife and her friends.”

“IN consequence of a controversy with the German Anabaptist preachers in Geneva, they were commanded, by an order which Farell procured from the magistracy, to quit the city under pain of death; and thus “liberty of conscience,” which had been publicly proclaimed as the first principle of the church of Geneva, was shamefully violated. To prevent similar dangers, Calvin drew up a Confession of Faith, which all the burgesses and inhabitants of Geneva were sworn to uphold and maintain. This innovation was soon followed by the establishment of a tribunal to punish the impugners of the faith, which was, in all but name, a Protestant Inquisition.”

“THE Senate of Geneva obeyed every caprice of Calvin; it took cognizance of every breach of church discipline, and even descended to inquire into the most minute violations of Calvinistic rule. The Register of the Republic for the 20th of May, 1537,

contains the following record:—"A married lady having gone out last Sunday, wearing her hair in longer curls than is becoming, which is a bad example, and contrary to what is taught by the preachers of the gospel, it is ordered that she be committed to prison, together with her two attendants, and the person who dressed her hair."

The lady disciples of Calvin are under unspeakable obligations to their master. They should express their gratitude by erecting to him statues of bronze in all their churches, (only that might be deemed idolatrous, and Calvinism is iconoclastic as well as anthropoclastic), for being a man of "consecrated intellect," he had a special regard for the good of their souls, and would rather "smite with a scab the crown of the daughters of Zion," than suffer them to peril their salvation by wearing a ringlet unfashioned to the orthodox taste of Geneva. It was well for that Mary, who, with her long tresses, or as our Irish bard has it,

"With her golden hair,
Where once the diamond shone,"

"did wipe" the Saviour's feet, after bathing them with her tears, that there was no Calvin by, or she might have been taught to expiate the heresy of wearing such tresses by giving them to a tonsor, in exchange for a shaven crown. The apostle Paul, heretic as he was, declared, that "if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her." But Calvin knew better, and had a superior taste, and more just sense of decorum, than to tolerate such vanities. It was rather hard, however, on the hair-dresser and female attendants to put them into "durance vile," for obeying their mistress, especially as there is a scripture which says, "Servants, obey your masters." Notwithstanding, they might felicitate themselves on the lightness of their punishment, since Calvin enjoyed the enviable privilege of not only lopping off the hyacinthine locks and ambrosial curls of the fair but the heretical heads of those who wore them.

NOTE, p. 171.

"Among a host of various writers who have spoken of Calvin in terms of just condemnation, the names of Grotius, Gibbon, Voltaire, John Wesley, and Roscoe, stand distinguished."

To these names should be added that of a noble lord highly and justly celebrated in the history of his country, as a lawyer and a statesman of versatile genius, and eminent literary and scientific accomplishments.

Lord Brougham, in his speech on the Maynooth Bill, said, "If he were required to name the one who most strongly laid down, not the right only, but the duty of extirpating heretics, he would say Calvin. And what he preached he supported by act

and example. By acts of the most atrocious perfidy, and by opening letters, he entrapped Servetus to Geneva, and there, because he suspected him of Socinian doctrines, after a mockery of a trial, had him burned alive. The same tendency to persecute was exhibited even by the pilgrim fathers who settled the first colonies in North America. Mr. Jared Sparks, in his *History of Massachusetts*, states that in the very first ship that returned to England from the settlement of Salem, two persons were sent home in irons, to be dealt with by the brethren, for having used the form of Common Prayer prescribed by the Church."

Such have been, are, and ever will be, the fruits of the poison tree of Calvinism.

NOTE, *Preface*, p. xii.

"The pantheistic theologian."

The Editor of the Christian Reformer (for this month,) which has just reached the author, June 3rd, says:—"It is satisfactory to find that Emile Saisset's proofs of the Pantheism of Servetus rest on a few mystical passages, which, in the mouth of one devoted to the Platonic philosophy might mean any thing but Pantheism. He proves the Pantheism of Servetus as much by logic from the Deity of Christ as the datum, as by induction of passages from his writings. Servetus's principle of the indivisibility of the Divine Nature, is in reality as directly opposed to Pantheism as light to darkness. Germany presents us at the present day with the sight of Pantheism, combined with all the dogmas of the orthodox faith."

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